

Fire & Rescue

January 2014

News



**FRNSW mobilises
as bushfires blaze
across the State**

**Using research
and data to drive
organisational
performance**



Fire &
Rescue NSW

The Minister Writes



As the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I want to convey my heartfelt thanks to all Fire & Rescue NSW firefighters and support staff who worked tirelessly during the recent bush fires, protecting communities in need.

FRNSW firefighters displayed enormous dedication and professionalism as they worked closely with NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers, NSW National Parks and Wildlife and other emergency services personnel in extreme weather conditions to battle the many bush fires that raged across the State.

This year's bush fire season arrived early and with a vengeance but our emergency service personnel worked tirelessly to keep the community safe during what was a dangerous and evolving situation.

Many of you from outside the Greater Sydney Area answered the call to join one of the biggest mobilisations of FRNSW resources in the service's long and proud history, responding to the crisis en masse. Colleagues from interstate also joined you in the mammoth task that was protecting lives and property from the brutal fires.

It is a unique and comforting site to see Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade engines responding to calls for assistance from the City of Sydney and surrounding suburbs.

We often remark that it is the 'Australian way' to help out a mate, but during that time friends from far and wide banded together when it counted most, lending a hand and shouldering some of the burden of the task at hand. We thank our friends and colleagues from Queensland, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia for their support, professionalism and most of all, their mateship.

The NSW Government understands and sympathises with the communities affected by the bush fires for all they have endured, for the loss they have suffered and for the long road ahead to recovery.

The bush fires hit our own emergency service personnel, many of whom lost their own homes while protecting others. Both the NSW and Australian Governments responded promptly to the unfolding disaster with a range of assistance measures and programs to aid the recovery process.

Once again, I would like to congratulate Fire & Rescue NSW Personnel for their extraordinary efforts in response to the recent bush fires and I want to thank them for going above and beyond the call to help those in need.

The Hon Michael Gallacher MLC
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

The Commissioner Writes



Following catastrophic bushfire conditions in January this year and the loss of 53 homes near Coonabarrabran, in September and October we experienced the worst start to a bushfire season in living memory.

Conditions were exacerbated by the hottest and driest winter on record and the hottest September on record. Since early September serious fires began breaking out across the State, with bushfire conditions intensifying throughout October, and the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Newcastle and Southern Highlands amongst the worst hit areas.

By the end of October, 208 houses and 40 other buildings had been destroyed, most in the Springwood/Winmalee area, and a further 165 houses were damaged. Just one month into the 6-month bushfire season and the property damage toll of all previous NSW bushfire emergencies, except possibly 1939, has already been surpassed. Sadly two lives have also been lost.

This issue highlights the magnificent efforts of Fire & Rescue NSW personnel in October as they worked in close cooperation with other firefighting agencies to battle atrocious conditions and protect the community from the numerous uncontrolled blazes that threatened many communities across the State. I am enormously proud of the efforts of all our people and the incredible work they did to protect life and property in such challenging circumstances. Thank you for all your efforts.

In addition, this issue also includes a feature on how FRNSW uses data and research in order to improve and inform organisational performance. Clear timely accurate information is critical in all our operations, and this issue describes some of the many ways that information is helping us to deliver better emergency management services and continue to be a world class fire and rescue service.

I'm sure you'll find this bumper issue fascinating reading.

Greg Mullins AFMSM
Commissioner

Front cover: Regional West resources assemble at Mount Panorama Bathurst before deploying to the Blue Mountains to work in Strike Teams. Photo used by permission Western Advocate.

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Send in your stories and photos

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TUE 10 SEP

The 2013/14 bushfire season started early this year providing a taste of what lay ahead. On Tuesday 10 September weather conditions rapidly worsened, with the forest fire danger index reaching Extreme at Mascot and Severe across most of Sydney. Major outbreaks included a fire at Castlereagh near Penrith which burnt >900ha, a fire at Winmalee in the Lower Blue Mountains which burnt >500ha, and a fire at Marsden Park which destroyed a home and several outbuildings. Around 70 FRNSW appliances were deployed to western Sydney and Blue Mountains firegrounds with off-duty firefighters recalled, College instructors and recruits called in to assist, and training and drills cancelled.



HOW THE BUSHFIRE CRISIS UNFOLDED

SUN 13 OCT

As the bushfire crisis progressively worsened across the State, FRNSW deployed dozens of on-duty, retained and recalled crews, mainly to three major fires near Port Stephens, but also to a large number of fires in greater Sydney and elsewhere in NSW. Crews and Strike Teams were dispatched to the Hunter from as far away as the North Coast (RN1) and Sydney, and a number of homes were lost as winds gusting to almost 100kmh made direct fire attack almost impossible.

Later that week as fire and weather conditions again worsened, extensive FRNSW resources were deployed to the bushfire emergencies across the Blue Mountains, Newcastle and the Hunter region, the Central Coast, Charmhaven, the South Coast, the North Coast and the Southern Highlands.

...more than 200 fire appliances and 1,000 firefighters responded to hundreds of separate bushfire incidents...

THU 17 OCT

FRNSW pre-deployed all available firefighters from the greater Sydney area to the outer suburbs most at risk from bushfire. In all, more than 200 fire appliances and 1,000 firefighters responded to hundreds of separate bushfire incidents in addition to the usual spate of structure fires, MVAs and hazmat incidents. 17 reserve fire appliances were equipped, staffed and deployed to bushfire operations. Additional crews from the Southern Tablelands, Central West and Western Slopes were called upon to provide relief overnight to hard-pressed FRNSW fire crews fighting the fierce blazes in the Blue Mountains.

The Springwood/Winmalee fire of 17 October will go into the history books as one of the fastest and most destructive ever experienced in NSW. FRNSW was the first service on scene at Linksvie Avenue, subsequently responding dozens of appliances. Many crews and senior officers in cars rescued stranded residents who might otherwise have suffered serious injury or worse. Simultaneously, at Mt Victoria, FRNSW and RFS crews were being overrun by a crowning fire, and it was only due to the professionalism and skill of FRNSW and RFS firefighters that serious injuries were averted.

FRI 18 OCT

20 crews from the greater Sydney area were deployed to the Blue Mountains and tasked with mopping up and firefighting operations around the Springwood and Winmalee areas. USAR specialists were sent to lead multi-agency teams conducting rapid damage assessments.

In addition to Newcastle and Central Coast fire crews, more than 50 firefighters from Sydney were deployed to provide relief to firefighters battling bushfires in the Catherine Hill Bay area, and more than 30 regional firefighters were deployed to assist in the Southern Highlands. Local fire crews remained active in the Lithgow area.

After visiting FRNSW crews in the field at Winmalee the previous night, on 18 October Commissioner Mullins flew over the Blue Mountains fires in Fire Air 1 with the Premier and RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons in order to survey the extent of the fire fronts and assess the damage already caused.



38,000_{ha}

STATE MINE FIRE 19.10.13

53

REGIONAL FIRE CREWS BROUGHT TO SYDNEY

SAT 19 OCT

Weather projections and computer modeling of existing fires indicated the possibility that the then 38,000 ha State Mine fire to the north of Bells Line of Road, the 1,500 ha Mount York fire near Mt Victoria and Blackheath, and the 3,000 ha Linksvie Ave fire near Winmalee and Springwood could potentially link up and impact on every town between Blackheath and Springwood during possibly severe to extreme bushfire weather conditions on Wednesday 23 October.

Accordingly a very significant amount of planning by the fire services and other agencies took place, and the Premier declared a State of Emergency under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act. This enabled forced evacuations if necessary and other powers such as the cutting off of gas and electricity supplies.

Some major decisions were made in response to the predictions, including:

- The three Incident Management Teams dealing with the fires based at Katoomba, Lithgow and Hawkesbury were combined. Strategic command was placed under RFS Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, FRNSW Deputy Commissioner Jim Smith, and National Parks Director Tom Bagnat
- Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton and Chief Superintendent John Denny were part of a multi-agency planning team, and AC Hamilton also became a Deputy Incident Controller in the Blue Mountains
- Assistant Commissioner Mark Brown led strategic planning for internal FRNSW operations
- Deputy Chief Executive Rosemary Milkins coordinated non-operational support and finance.

SUN 20 OCT

FRNSW brought 53 regional fire appliances and crews to Sydney in anticipation of the forecast conditions on 23 October – many regional fire stations

with more than one appliance sent one to Sydney, as occurred during the 1994 bushfires and the 1999 Sydney hailstorm recovery. Every available spare, SEV and Training appliance was staffed with recalled crews, all 16 appliances from Blue Mountains fire stations were stood up, supplemented by 50 appliances from Sydney (leaving 52 pumpers, all aeriels, hazmat and heavy rescues in place for normal response). In addition, 10 appliances and crews each from both the Queensland Fire & Rescue Service and the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade came to assist us, with the MFB appliances backfilling vacated Sydney stations. The ACT, Victoria, Queensland, WA, Tasmania and South Australia also sent resources to assist the RFS. FRNSW Community Fire Units were also activated.

MON 21 OCT

Commissioner Mullins briefed firstly Blue Mountains retained crews and then CFU volunteers at 359 Lawson, later also meeting Strike Team members at 226 Blackheath to brief them on the overall bushfire situation in the Mountains and preparations to deal with expected deteriorating conditions.

TUE 22 OCT

Preparations for the unprecedented Wednesday 23 October deployment were finalised. Using our USAR cache, staff from Logistics Support and Education and Training (including the new recruit class) set up temporary accommodation and an appliance staging area at Sydney Olympic Park. Mountains communities were advised to evacuate wherever possible, and schools and many other local services were temporarily closed.

Rapid damage assessment teams from FRNSW and other agencies began work in the Blue Mountains to assess the safety of homes and other properties in bushfire-affected areas.

WED 23 OCT

FRNSW was at maximum capacity following the largest short term mobilisation in the organisation's history. This involved every available spare and training appliance being staffed, mostly by recalled staff, 53 regional pumpers and tankers brought to Sydney, 10 Melbourne MFB pumpers backfilling Sydney stations with composite MFB/FRNSW crews, and 10 QFRS pumpers supplementing our bushfire Strike Teams. Around 170 appliances and nearly 800 firefighters were amassed by FRNSW to cover the Blue Mountains.

Previous major Blue Mountains bushfire emergencies had shown that in the event of simultaneous impact along the Bells Line of Road and the Great Western Highway, this level of resourcing and more would have been required. Thankfully, the plans put in place were, in part, unnecessary, however the fire services took the prudent approach of planning for the worst while hoping for the best. The light rain that fell across the firegrounds in the early hours of the 23rd meant that rather than nearly 300 kilometres of fire perimeter being impacted by hot, dry almost gale force winds from early morning, we faced a far more manageable situation. Bushfire activity flared later in the day, including several major fires in the Newcastle area, but were met with decisive and determined firefighting strategies using both ground and air resources.

Throughout October

Despite deploying an unprecedented number of firefighting resources to the bushfire crisis, FRNSW still maintained 'business as usual' in the Sydney metropolitan, Central Coast, Illawarra, Newcastle and regional areas. We kept adequate emergency response resources available to respond to grass and bushfires, road accidents, structure fires, rescues and hazardous materials emergencies. ■■■■ **END**

STORIES FROM THE FIRE FRONT

'SNATCH-AND-GRAB' RESCUES SAVE SCORES OF LIVES IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Riverwood crew rescues people trapped in fire zone

A crew from Riverwood Fire Station joined hundreds of other firefighters battling fires which caused devastation in the Winmalee area on Thursday [17/10]. Normally working out of Randwick, Station Officer Rod Slavik joined Riverwood firefighters Dave Humphries, Ian Lampe and Cath Douglas for the day, describing them as an exceptional crew to work with. "They were really great, they just got on and did what needed to be done," SO Slavik said.

It was a busy day for the Riverwood crew who started the day fighting a workshop fire full of flammable LPG tanks and welding equipment, before heading to Winmalee where they were tasked with rescuing people trapped in the fire zone. As other firefighters fought

the flames, the Riverwood truck ferried several people to safety ...

Bankstown Canterbury Torch, 23/10

"On Singles Ridge Rd other fire crews were everywhere desperately trying to save properties. It was a free-for-all. We [the Riverwood crew] went straight into snatch and grabs because we were getting messages that there were a number of people trapped in their homes. We did about four snatch and grab rescues where we drove through the fire and made several pickups of residents from their homes and took them to safety. We were essentially running a taxi service there for a while. We grabbed a grandmother and her two grandkids from a house at Winmalee. We gave the kids some trauma teddies, which helped them a bit. We also got a woman and her two dogs and a guy who was on the side of the



street and another couple."

SO Slavik said it was difficult to move about in those conditions even in the truck. "There was fire everywhere, fallen branches and power lines, and thick black smoke which made it very difficult. We couldn't see so we had to creep through. There were so many houses burning."

FRNSW Facebook, 18/10

Strike Team Hotel fights to save people and homes

Strike Team Hotel was led by Inspector Rob Jansen. The team left Greenacre at 3pm Thursday 17 October and headed straight to Springwood and Winmalee.

"The fire front had just been through. There was very little water in the mains so we were using tankers where we could. There were houses alight everywhere."

Crews fought to save properties where they could, but given the circumstances, a number focused on saving people from their homes. They performed numerous snatch and grab rescues from homes under threat.

FRNSW Facebook, 18/10

Lane Cove fires save 2 kids from burning house in Yellow Rock

Saving two women, two children and three houses from bushfires is all in a day's work for the boys at the Lane Cove fire station. Brent Griffiths, Rhett Davis, Glen Solway and Christopher Bennett were on duty in Yellow Rock on Thursday October 17 when they were alerted to a 3-year-old and a 6-month-old trapped in a home, surrounded by fire that had engulfed the neighbouring property.

It was too dangerous for the parents and another woman to attempt to

evacuate with the children under such extreme conditions. SF Solway instead entered the house and returned with them just in time.

"I could imagine through the eyes of that three-year-old – she would have thought the world was ending," SO Griffiths said. "She was absolutely petrified, so we took the opportunity to give her a big smile and let her know she gets to go in a big fire truck that had just arrived, and it was enough to take her mind away from what was occurring around her."

SO Griffiths said if the crew had arrived three or four minutes later it would have been too late. "It was on the cusp of going – the window upstairs had cracked so there was an open corridor for embers," he said.

After moving on to saving two other properties, the crew was relieved to discover the house they had been forced to abandon was still standing. But the challenges didn't end there, with the crew encountering difficulty getting themselves out of the area. "We had to put ourselves in a fair bit of risk just to even get to the next place because of wires and trees falling down – it was pretty hectic," he said.

SO Griffiths and SF Solway, who have 35 years of experience between them,

had never encountered fires with such intensity.

North Shore Times, 25/10

Orange fires combat explosions and fireballs in huge shed fire

Last Thursday [17/10] FRNSW Orange A/Deputy Captain Grant Crossman and three other Orange firefighters were sent to assist with the growing bushfire emergency at Springwood and Winmalee at the base of the Blue Mountains.

"It was just devastation, I've never seen it so bad," he said.

Mr Crossman said it was terrible not to be able to help everyone but hard decisions had to be made. "Houses had been totally lost and still burning and all we can do there is make sure it doesn't spread to the house next door," he said. "You've got to save what's savable and let go what's not."

A lasting memory of the bushfire disaster was when Mr Crossman and his crew scrambled for safety when they were sent to extinguish a huge shed on fire. "You could hear explosions and a huge fireball came out of the roof," he said. "Gas cylinders were venting and we withdrew and just made sure nothing else caught alight."

Central Western Daily, 21/10

Captain Darryn Moalem's story

Springwood Captain Darryn Moalem had just finished a round of golf with some of his mates at the Linksvie Golf Club when fellow patrons pointed out the rapidly approaching black smoke.

"I immediately rang our Comms Operators and told them we were going to need every resource possible in Springwood and I headed to Springwood Fire Station. In my 17 years as a Retained Firefighter, I'd never seen anything like it. The fire just moved so fast. We saved as many houses as we could but they kept going up. It was just life preservation in the end – we did as many snatch and grabs as we could. A lot of people were already evacuated, but there were so many reports coming in of people not knowing where their neighbours or loved ones were, and because the lines were down, they couldn't reach them. We were going into burning houses first in Thompson Avenue and then in Heather Glen Road and Yellow Rock Road and many other streets that were ablaze. We escorted eight people from the mushroom farm out and there was this one young guy who was just coming out of his house as we pulled up. It was too late for his home. This happened to so many other people but we were able to get lots of them out."

FRNSW Facebook, 18/10

Firefighter's family trapped while he was out fighting the bushfires

Fireman David Dufty was one of the first to respond to the Springwood bushfire alert. He rushed to the fire station in the family's only car.

But the horror of what was happening was about to get even worse. As the fire engine drove to the fire in Linksvie Road, he heard over the vehicle's radio communications that Birdwood Avenue was under threat. That was where his wife, Angela, his baby girl and two sons were at home – with no car.

He said: "They had nowhere to go. I got my dad, John, on the phone – he's also a retained fireman – and told him to run over to my house and rescue my family. My wife was hiding in the bathroom with some of my firefighter gear over them."

John Dufty grabbed his daughter-in-law and three grandchildren and beat a retreat in his car from the advancing fire. Angela, Riva, 12 months, and boys Harper, 2, and Brodie, 4, were all rescued. The house was not damaged but, despite the efforts of David's fire crew, the house next door was lost.

Angela Dufty said: "I can't imagine what he thought when he heard his own road on the fire comms." And, when it comes to being left at home without a car, she is pretty clear about how she will handle his next call-out. "Next time I will take him to the fire station," she said.

Sun-Herald, 20/10



50+ people and mini-menagerie saved:

St Mary's firefighters saved not only 54 people, but also 23 dogs, 3 cats, a bird and a diabetic horse.

They were stranded. With fires raging around them, a group of Yellow Rock residents who had fled to the lookout thinking they would be safe wondered if they would survive. Robyn Gillies Tabrett, who brought Rosie, her border collie, and Rumble, her horse, said she headed to the lookout because it had burnt just weeks earlier and "I thought it was the only place I stood half a chance". But as time marched on, "I thought, great, we've got to the lookout and now we're going to die here".

As they grew increasingly desperate, even considering hiking down the cliff to reach the Nepean River, suddenly out of the smoke emerged a Fire and Rescue NSW truck. Headed by relieving station officer Tony "Gutters" Gutteridge, the four-man team from C Platoon at St Marys took control.

"It was hectic, we had been going from job to job, doing snatch and grabs [rescues of people trapped in the fire] and the guy driving my truck, Phil Holdsworth, got a call from his wife saying his sister was trapped down there. We were on a mission, we drove through flames to get to the people, ran over trees with the truck, we had to get out there," said Mr Gutteridge. "I said to them [the residents at the lookout]: 'You can't stay here, it's not safe'. It was a little bit of a nightmare,

Bushfire Officer Greg Hopcroft's story

Bushfire Officer SO Greg Hopcroft spent Thursday 17 October moving through the Blue Mountains monitoring fire behaviour and feeding information back to the Fire Control Centre at Katoomba about where the fires were going.

"At about 1.30pm I was responded to Springwood where we heard there were houses being impacted. When I got there, I immediately went to the area around Linksvie Road. I turned into Gahnia Way off Hawkesbury Rd and sent my first red message of the day. There were numerous houses alight. I sent red messages from Emma Parade and Lochnivar Street too. It was moving too fast. I kept hearing on the radio of different persons reported trapped in houses so I started doing snatch and grab rescues. I did a few trips. I went to two houses at Moray Street and two at Heather Glen Road where residents were trapped. I got them and I picked up their neighbours who were really distressed with smoke inhalation. I took them all to the control point. There was thick black smoke everywhere and the fire was almost upon us.

It was dreadful. The worst I have seen. The fire was travelling so fast. I couldn't keep up with how fast it was going down the road. In Emma Parade and Gahnia Way, there were houses going up everywhere and I told everyone I could get out. I tried to do forward reconnaissance as much as I could so we could put strike teams in place, but it was moving too fast."

FRNSW Facebook, 18/10

I thought, 'I don't like this', with the amount of smoke coming through and the heat, a few spotfires under the cars and they would have been in trouble."

The fire truck led the convoy of cars a kilometre back along Yellow Rock Road, between burning trees, to the home of Susan and Bob Pearson. There, for the next five hours, the residents sheltered as 30-metre flames surrounded them: 54 people (the youngest was just 13 weeks old; the oldest, Mrs Pearson's 90-year-old mum Maud), 23 dogs, three cats, a bird and a diabetic horse on a float parked

outside the front door.

Outside, Bob Pearson joined the firefighters in battling the blaze, using water from the pool as the fire truck had run dry. Catherine Robley, who was with her elderly father, said they sat in the house and "watched all the area around us burn". Twelve houses were lost in the street.

Mr Gutteridge, said "It was a first for me and hopefully the last. Your training cuts in and you do your job. We just did what we had to do."

Blue Mountains Gazette, 6/11

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE!

HOT BOCCE BALL SMASHES WILLOUGHBY TRUCK

Nothing could have prepared a Willoughby crew for what came their way at the bushfires in Yellow Rock. Officers Phil Weekes, Rory Fegan and Brad Dempsey pulled up 40m from a burning house on October 17 when an explosion erupted and an object flew out of the house, smashing the rear windscreen of the appliance.

The officers chased the object down the road to discover it was a bocce ball, so hot they couldn't touch it despite wearing protective gloves and not even after cooling it in a bucket of water for 20

minutes. The boiling and heavy metal ball travelling at a very high speed, narrowly missed Mr Weekes who was sitting opposite the window.

"You reflect on that and you think if it went a foot the other way there would have been serious trouble," Mr Weekes said. He has kept the ball as a souvenir. "It's a good story to tell but you have to feel the ball in your hand – then you realise just how devastating it could have been," he said.

North Shore Times, 25/10

KEEPING THEIR COOL IN YERRINBOOL

Four members of a FRNSW strike team were deployed in the Southern Highlands. The North Albury station crew left Sunday morning [20/10] and spoke of the challenging conditions. North Albury's captain Andrew Schneider said firefighters faced smoky conditions and relentless wind.

"The wind was unbelievable on Wednesday, I have never seen anything like it," he said. "We were protecting a small township called Yerrinbool and the fire was coming up the valley. It was windy and the township was built in the middle of scrub. I thought it was going to be on that day, but they had aircraft in the air and they were smashing it pretty hard."

Backburning was conducted and the North Albury crew returned to the township on Wednesday to monitor any breakouts or ember attacks. "It's all contained, it's about strengthening containment lines now," Mr Schneider said.

Border Mail, Albury-Wodonga, 25/10



NO SHELTER FOR STRIKE TEAM DELTA

Inspector John McDonough led Strike Team Delta with the local CFU and crews from Dunheved, Rhodes, Merrylands and Katoomba. On Thursday 17 October they were sent to protect property at Mount Victoria. The Lithgow fire had spotted and was threatening homes. They were protecting homes on Closeburn Drive as the fire moved through.

"We lost about eight homes," Inspector McDonough said. "We were lucky there weren't 20 or 30 homes lost. In my 27 years in the job, I have never seen anything like it in terms of winds. The crews spread along the street but it came hard and fast. There were a number of moments where I feared for the safety of our crews."

The fire front passed over the top of crews as they fought to save homes. "The trucks got some damage when it went over our position. There was very thick smoke and the heat and poor visibility made it very difficult. There were

times there when I had to kneel down or I would have been blown off my feet, the winds were so strong. We also had a couple of guys who suffered smoke inhalation and we gave them oxygen."

The Strike Team stayed at Mount Victoria for a few hours before being redeployed to Springwood and Winmalee where they concentrated on the fight to save homes after the fire front had already been through.

(FRNSW Facebook, 18/10)

ROAST CHICKEN OFF THE MENU: FIREFIGHTERS SAVE HOUSES AND 360,000 CHOOKS

Five members of Gundagai's Fire and Rescue Station 313 have returned home after three exhausting days deployed in the Southern Highlands, while another four members joined the fight last Tuesday. Experienced firefighter Liam Kenneally along with Captain Brad Field, Deputy Captain Phil Smith and firefighters Brad Smith and Adam Thomas, was deployed to the Hall Road fire last Friday morning to perform property protection.

"When we got there on Friday, only six hectares had burned," Liam said, "but by the time we left on Sunday, 14,000 hectares had gone up. It had started on Thursday and took out one house and a couple of sheds. On Friday another house was gone. We got a briefing on Friday morning and, in a task force with Yass, Bowral and Mittagong, we were tasked to a chicken farm in Yanderra which housed 360,000 chooks. The fire front was

heading towards the farm so we went in to protect it."

The chicken farm was saved, and when the wind changed and threatened six nearby houses, the task force moved quickly and managed to also save all six residences.

"After lunch on Friday the wind changed again, threatening the Hume Highway, where we worked with Rural Fire Service crews to stop the fire from crossing the highway. We worked on containment lines, and the southbound lane of the highway had to be closed along with the railway line when the fire jumped the train tracks." Along with four planes and four helicopters attacking the blaze from above, Liam said the Gundagai, Yass and Mittagong crews worked hard on the ground throughout the night and by 11pm had managed to contain the fire.

After an 8am briefing on Saturday

morning, the Gundagai and Yass members were tasked along with National Parks and Wildlife Services to establish a containment line from the Nepean Dam to the Hume Highway. "Gundagai and Yass had five on each truck and we worked with six National Parks people to back burn and put in a six kilometre containment line, digging two kilometres downhill in rough terrain," he said. "Nine thousand hectares of bushland would've burned, but when we phoned back on Monday they told us that the line was still holding so I think we, along with Yass and the National Parks, did a pretty good job there."

The Gundagai crew met Premier O'Farrell when he visited the Yanderra fire shed.

Gundagai independent, 24/10

SCHOOLKIDS THANK HUNTER FIRE CREWS

An unexpected pile of letters from school students thanking firefighters who risked their lives to control the Heatherbrae bushfire was a welcome end to a chaotic week. Maitland Fire Station Commander Peter Jones and his crew was overwhelmed when the package from Bolwarra Public School arrived last week and they delighted in reading every letter.

"It was such a nice gesture and it was very unexpected," he said. "We don't do what we do to get thanks, but it was a nice surprise."

The crew played a pivotal role in the Heatherbrae bushfire, especially when it broke containment lines on October 17 and threatened properties, Newcastle Airport and a Williamstown service station.

"We were in the thick of it," Mr Jones said. "We were patrolling the Heatherbrae area along Tomago Road and Cabbage Tree Road and putting out spot fires, and when it took off we were protecting homes and properties." The crew was part of a strike team that worked alongside RFS firefighters on the ground while aviation firefighters dropped water on the blaze from the air.

Mr Jones said the fire moved quickly once it breached containment lines and travelled two kilometres in an hour to threaten homes in Barrie Close. "We were there with four FRNSW pumpers and another three RFS trucks and we were each at a house trying to stop the fire from engulfing the homes. We were then putting out sheds that had been lost on Cabbage Tree Road."

When the fire started to threaten Newcastle Airport, the crew went to help. They also put out the grass fire near the service station at Williamstown. Mr Jones said he had not seen such a fierce fire since the 1994 bushfires. The crews also assisted at the Abermain grass fire, and the grass fire on McMullins Road in East Branxton that threatened homes last week.

Deputy Captain Peter Gray said the crew had participated in structure fire and hazmat drills with the Bolwarra-Largs RFS brigades earlier this year and that had helped them to work together and communicate effectively via their radios.

(Maitland Mercury 28/10)

RECRUITS PITCH IN DURING BUSHFIRE EFFORT

The third recruit class of 2013 were so keen during the October bushfires, you couldn't get them to go home. Recruit class 3/2013 supported FRNSW urban search and rescue staff in setting up tents and infrastructure to facilitate the operations at Sydney Olympic Park.

Director of Education and Training Gail Wykes said the 24 recruits had gone above and beyond the call of duty helping to set up and run the base of operations for hundreds of visiting regional and interstate firefighters at Sydney Olympic Park from 22-25 October.

"On Monday 21 October, the recruits were supposed to be doing appliance training but no appliances were available as they were all in use for the bushfires, so we had to change the program," Ms Wykes said. "On Tuesday we took them out to Sydney Olympic Park and they set up the tents at Carpark 9 and the beds and recreation areas at Skoda Stadium."

"They worked like Trojans. They were so energetic and keen to help in any way they could. They helped induct visiting firefighters to the base and made sure

they had sleeping bags, towels and were well looked after. Then at night they restowed all the trucks."

More than 350 regional and interstate firefighters spent three days at Sydney Olympic Park during the bushfires. The base of operations was set up by the recruits using the resources that were deployed during the Japan and Christchurch earthquake operations in 2011.

Ms Wykes said the recruit firefighters also made the most of having all the regional and interstate firefighters in one place by talking to them about their experiences and comparing practices. "It was a great experience for them all after only five weeks of training," she said.

END







FRNSW ON 'WAR FOOTING'

The biggest mobilisation in FRNSW's history

When fire agencies were alerted that weather and fire conditions for Wednesday 23 October were gearing up to be as bad, or even worse, than those experienced on 17 October, FRNSW Commissioner Mullins ordered one of the largest operational deployments in the organisation's history.

On Tuesday 22 October, 53 appliances – with more than 200 firefighters and officers – from Regional South, Regional North and Regional West, started rolling out toward Sydney to prepare for the extreme fire conditions forecast for the following day.

Their mission was to support the 16 units and 70 FRNSW personnel based in the Blue Mountains, recalled off-duty fire officers on reserve fleet appliances, and fire crews from suburban Sydney that were assembling in preparation for the forecast grim conditions.

By Tuesday night, 170 appliances and nearly 800 firefighters were ready to be deployed to the Blue Mountains. Preparations were also made to increase this to 200 appliances if the situation deteriorated.

Another 10 appliances from Melbourne were deployed to assist with providing coverage in the Sydney metropolitan area and a further 10 appliances from Queensland were sent to the Blue Mountains. The only other times that a similar mobilisation has taken place was during the 1994 bushfire emergencies and the 1999 Sydney hailstorm disaster.

Commissioner Mullins, himself a veteran of every Blue Mountains bushfire emergency since 1977, said the Blue Mountains and surrounding communities were potentially facing a bushfire threat on a scale that had not been experienced before.

"As such, FRNSW was at maximum capacity and ready to work shoulder to shoulder with NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers to protect lives and property in mountain communities," he said.

Commissioner Mullins said it was crucial that as well as deploying an unprecedented number of firefighting resources to the bushfire crisis, FRNSW was able to maintain 'business as usual' emergency coverage in communities across the State.

"In fact, during this major mobilisation, we had Strike Teams operating at large bushfires in the Gateshead, Redhead and Dudley areas near Newcastle," Commissioner Mullins said.

"During all this we maintained adequate emergency response resources available to respond to smaller bush and scrub fires, road accidents, structure fires, rescues and hazardous materials emergencies throughout NSW."

There were about 60 pumpers as well as specialist heavy rescue, hazmat and aerial appliances available to respond in the Sydney metropolitan area, and all fire stations in Newcastle, Wollongong, the Central Coast and major regional centres were at full strength.

It was a huge relief for emergency services when, in the early hours of Wednesday morning, storms and some rain arrived, dampening down all of the existing firegrounds and suppressing fire behaviour.

"While the rain was enough to take the edge off, control lines continued to be

tested on the main fires during the day," Commissioner Mullins said. "However, it was a completely different scenario to what we could have faced – nearly 400km of fire perimeter spreading rapidly under extreme conditions.

"Our entire organisation's incredible response to the bushfire crisis must be congratulated – permanent and retained firefighters from throughout NSW responded to the call for help, with regional firefighters dropping everything to assist, and off-duty metropolitan firefighters making themselves available. Community Fire Units were activated with volunteers travelling to the Mountains to prepare homes, and local units were operational on the worst days.

"All of our non operational areas stepped up to render vital support – whether preparing and stowing SEV and spare appliances, managing the accommodation area for regional and interstate teams at Sydney Olympic park, to keeping vital IT systems working, to feeding vital safety information to the public and media via social media and media interviews: everyone has played a vital role as we went on to a "war footing."

"While I am very relieved the rain saved us from a horror scenario that Wednesday, FRNSW was ready for it. Firefighters are among the most trusted professions because communities know we can be counted on to be there to help during the darkest of times – we always have and always will be there when needed."



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SUPPORTING THE FRONTLINE

Logistics Support Directorate

When the bushfire emergency hit, the Logistics Support Directorate swung into action. Logistics for an incident of this magnitude requires people, resources, planning, coordination and communication, and the team was well prepared for what lay ahead. Logistics Support Directorate was responsible for providing space for vehicles and equipment, organising accommodation and catering for firefighters, creating a landing zone for re-fuelling of Fire Air 1 and everything in between.

The Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) enabled use of its Carpark 9 as an emergency activation location, while the airconditioned Sydney Olympic Showground (Skoda Stadium) was used for sleeping quarters, amenities, ablutions and catering.

Teams from USAR, Education and Training, Championships and Fleet were instrumental in establishing the Major Field Operations Centre (MFOC) at Carpark 9 and organising the Skoda Stadium infrastructure. St John's Ambulance and Ambulance Service of NSW personnel were on both sites for the duration.

1. MAJOR FIELD OPERATIONS CENTRE AT CARPARK 9

- Parking for 100 appliances and 100 other vehicles (both recalled and support staff)
- Command tent with full IT mobile infrastructure
- Logistics store
- First aid tent with Ambulance Service of NSW and St John's Ambulance staffing
- Mess tent
- Shaded areas for mustering
- Generators to power entire site (the 66kVA trailer-mounted unit could run the site indefinitely if required)
- Independent water supply
- Portable toilets
- Sleeping tents for staff off-shift
- Fleet maintenance vehicles and repairers plus refuelling units and operators
- 5 operational staff 24/7 + 1 admin
- 50-seat coach and 22-seat tender, plus assorted minor fleet
- Security staff 24/7

Key logistic activities

- Liaise with Sydney Olympic Park Authority
- Coordinate establishment of the MFOC
- Liaise with MICC re deployment of resources
- Sign crews in/out to ensure firefighter safety and accountability



- Coordinate transport to and from Skoda Stadium
- Coordinate a central point of contact for receiving consumables for the site
- Perform general site maintenance and coordination
- Resource interstate crews with radios/mobile phones/adaptors/standpipes
- Manage the available minor fleet and resource senior officers for deployment
- Managing onsite workforce (including recruits) and site safety
- Liaise with Fleet, Education and Training, USAR, MICC, BICC and FRNSW personnel located at Skoda Stadium to ensure no delay in logistic support for operations
- Refuel, restock and repair (if necessary) appliances in the hours between their return and redeployment. This included SCBA servicing if used and washing and re-rolling used hose. This was generally accomplished between 2200 and 0600 hours every night.

Vehicles

These included:

- 100 appliances (including 20 from Melbourne and Queensland)
- 2 water tankers
- 2 bulk tankers
- 3 forward logistics support vehicles.
- 15 minor fleet vehicles

Power

The MFOC site was self-sufficient and ran on generator power for the first 24 hours. While generated power could have continued indefinitely if necessary, mains power was established to ensure uninterrupted supply.

Fleet Maintenance

To maximise the number of available fire appliances, maintenance teams worked around the clock conducting repairs and checking all appliances pre-dispatch. Full 24-hour breakdown and inspection maintenance was available both at the

frontline and back at SOPA 9 when task force activity was not required.

Forward Logistics Support Vehicles (x3)

The Logistics Support Vehicles enabled quick replenishing of emergency supplies to the front line which ensured that essential supplies were available close to the incident in case of road closures. Firefighters were able to receive immediate logistics support as needed.

- 30 SCBA cylinders
- 8 O2 cylinders
- 1 pallet of drinking water
- P2 masks, goggles, caps and gloves
- 5kVA generator
- Lighting, power boards, radio chargers.

2. SKODA STADIUM

USAR, Operational Logistics and Education and Training teams organised accommodation for 360 personnel. This included supplying bedding, hygiene, sanitation, first aid, security and meal catering. Usage peaked on Thursday night, 24 October when 288 personnel were accommodated.

Key logistic activities

- Coordinate site and liaise with SOPA 9 site manager re requirements
- Source and set up of stretcher beds, sleeping arrangements
- Brief/induct crews upon arrival
- Coordinate cabs/travel for Melbourne Fire Brigade
- Liaise with Staging Officer at SOPA 9 for arrival and departure of crews
- Provide additional labour to SOPA 9 (recruits) when available
- Identify consumable requirements and receipt of goods for the site
- Organise catering arrangements
- Liaise with and organise meals and hot refuelling for FireAir 1
- Ensure security through check in and check out system
- Arrange daily laundry pickup and collection



IT Directorate

The IT Directorate provided vital support to the thousands of firefighters and vehicles deployed to the Blue Mountains and other areas with little or failing telecommunications and ensured that ESCAD, SAP, RTAS, and other primary systems stood up to the record loads experienced on major bushfire days. Hundreds of additional radios and phones were provided to interstate and regional crews. Satellite networks and radio repeaters were placed in the Blue Mountains to ensure communications even when the public networks became congested or failed. PCs and WiFi internet connectivity were provided for the tent cities and numerous command posts. IT provided handheld devices to facilitate rapid damage assessment which was key to the recovery effort. IT staff were also posted to major centres and commands throughout the bushfire campaign to provide technical support as required.

Operational Communications

On 17 October, operators in FRNSW's two Communication Centres experienced one of the busiest days on record as they processed all fire calls for the State for both FRNSW and RFS.

"This wasn't just an emergency," said Superintendent Peter Levett, Manager Operational Communications, "this was a disaster. Our role was to help the community, and we had 200 homes on fire. Our operators were taking calls from people whose houses were on fire and

trying to talk them to safety. It was very traumatic on both ends of the phone, but our operators calmly helped to save those people. At one stage four operators were simultaneously talking to people who had houses burning. Despite the incredibly stressful circumstances, those operators were able to deploy appliances to where they were needed and played a large part in saving the lives of those callers".

Human resources

During the bushfire emergency over 500 permanent firefighters were recalled and assigned to FRNSW Strike Teams. Organising a deployment of this size was no small feat. Information regarding firefighter availability, varying shift rosters and platoons needed to be incorporated and used, but creative thinking by the Operational Staffing team found a way to streamline the process.

Usually before completing their shift, firefighters indicate their availability for recalls to the Duty Commander. This information is collated and recall lists are used as required. In an emergency, the Operational Staffing team can use these lists to phone available firefighters.

Prior to the Strike Team mobilisation on 23 October, seven Operational Staffing team members spent over four hours trying to contact firefighters. It soon became apparent that the current system was falling short, and a more efficient method needed to be found. Fast!

The team remembered that when FRNSW firefighters were in Japan, their

families were sent updates via bulk SMS text messages. It was suggested that bulk messaging might work for the recalls too, and after consultation with IT, a list of mobile numbers was generated via SAM.

It worked so well that Operational Staffing was inundated with calls. Five hundred firefighters were texted and 400 replied. "It was just like being in a call centre," said Operational Staffing Manager Superintendent Paul Johnstone. "We were able to easily achieve the recalls."

The bulk messaging system enabled the team to better plan in advance for day and night shifts and worked particularly well when the Strike Teams were stood down. "We were able to let people know well in advance that they would no longer be required," said Superintendent Johnstone.

This initiative was so successful that Operational Staffing plan to use bulk messaging to recall staff in future. It is vital, however, that people have correct mobile numbers entered on ESS.

STAFF RECALLS

- 412 Firefighters
- 157 Station Officers
- 14 Inspectors
- **Total number of recalls = 583**



Hazmat and urban search and rescue crews

In the aftermath of the devastating fires, on Tuesday 22 October, rapid damage assessment teams from FRNSW, the Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW Work Cover, NSW Public Works, Blue Mountains Council, NSW Police and Ministry of Police and Emergency Services began work in the Blue Mountains to assess the safety of homes and other properties in bushfire-affected areas.

Seven teams (14 firefighters) comprised of USAR and Hazmat specialists assessed more than 350 properties in Winmalee, Springwood, Yellow Rock and Mount Victoria and appraised the structural integrity of the buildings. They also conducted searches for other potential hazards including asbestos, stored chemicals, dangerous trees and environmental hazards. The specialist teams were also deployed to the Wyong area, where they assessed 11 properties, and to Port Stephens where they assessed 10 properties.

These teams played an important role in the recovery effort on behalf of the bushfire affected communities.

Aviation support

During bushfire operations, FireAir-1 flew multiple missions, including damage assessment, fire mapping, command oversight, and transport of essential equipment such as a satellite radio repeater unit.

Number of recalls

583

Number of properties assessed

>350

Number of air sorties

22

Air Traffic at Bankstown Airport was particularly heavy during the bushfire emergency, so the move to base FireAir-1 at Skoda Stadium, Sydney Olympic Park allowed the aircraft and crew to rapidly respond where most needed.

The multipurpose role of FireAir-1 came to the fore during the bushfire emergency with the aircraft completing 22 fire sorties to the numerous firegrounds in the Blue Mountains and Hunter Region.

FireAir-1 provided FRNSW firefighting operations with both a tactical observation platform and fast and effective logistics support – moving 46 specialist personnel and hundreds of kilograms of equipment where needed most. NSW Premier Barry O’Farrell also inspected the damage to the Blue Mountains along with FRNSW Commissioner Mullins and RFS Commissioner Fitzsimmons aboard FireAir-1 on Thursday 18 October.

FRNSW Aviation Officers Anthony Wallgate and Shannon Crofton worked on the aircraft during the response and provided close support to firefighters and senior officers on the ground.

“One mission that FireAir-1 was able to be tasked with and complete quickly was flying critical satellite communications equipment from Sydney to the Blue Mountains operations,” said Aviation Officer Wallgate. “It’s exactly the type of tasking and capability the aircraft offers. The interior can be configured to transport passengers and then very quickly reconfigured to move equipment and provide logistical support.”

“There’s a real tactical advantage to being able to literally have a ‘helicopter view’ of a fire operation,” said Aviation Officer Crofton. “Being able to take Commissioner Mullins over the incident grounds allowed him, and other senior officers, to put all the intel and data they were getting on the fires into a firsthand perspective from above. The ability to fly in to Skoda, pick up the Commissioner; fly to the fireground and then get him back to Homebush to continue overseeing FRNSW operations was invaluable.”

FireAir-1 (registered as PoAir-5) is a jointly funded shared resource between the NSW Police Force and FRNSW.

END

CFUS SWING INTO ACTION

Story by: Karolina Marks, CFU Communications Officer

FRNSW's Community Fire Units have been very busy this bushfire season, with 46 documented CFU unit activations since the beginning of September. 40 of those activations occurred during the 10-24 October bushfires. The hard work and bravery of these CFU members resulted in many homes being saved and damage reduced. In the bushfire-ravaged communities of Winmalee, Yellow Rock and Mt Victoria, CFU members lost 22 homes, although thanks to their vigilance and preparedness, there were no injuries or fatalities. The outstanding performance by CFU volunteers in the Blue Mountains helped keep all CFU trailers and fixed hose posts intact, with only minor equipment losses.





Several stories emerged of heroic work done by some CFU volunteers, who, despite losing their own homes, stayed and fought to save other properties. Julie Willis, Team Co-ordinator from MHP-192, lost everything, but still went back and helped save her neighbours' homes. She rallied her team to extinguish embers that threatened other properties and was a real inspiration to others. This showed the spirit and effectiveness of the units and the importance of the roles played by Team Leaders.

Some volunteers who activated had only been trained just weeks before. The feedback they gave was very positive and highlighted the thorough knowledge and practical professional training provided for them by CFU officers and FRNSW firefighters. Members spoke of the value of the training and equipment they had received which resulted in the activation of well-prepared teams making wise decisions and avoiding injuries.

During the October bushfires, four CFU officers were in the field delivering critical advice, communication and support to the CFU members in the Blue Mountains area. CFU staff held five operational briefings in Glenbrook, Springwood, Lawson, Leura and Katoomba. CFU volunteers were briefed with up-to-date information on weather conditions, the level of support available from firefighters and a reminder of their duties and responsibilities. Key points were distributed the following morning to all Team Coordinators from the Blue Mountains area who couldn't attend the briefings.

Several weeks after the disaster, FRNSW's CFU team organised operational debriefs in the bushfire-ravaged communities. These meetings were attended by firefighters, CFU team members, and CFU staff discussing the events that occurred and what improvements could be made in the future. Many stories emerged of the horrendous conditions faced as well as the outstanding work done.

While none of the CFU members were injured, they were all subject to significant stress. As the emotional trauma of losing a home or watching the loss of others is difficult to cope with, the affected CFU volunteers were offered counselling and mental health support through FRNSW's Employee Assistance Program. A followup counselling and peer support program is also being implemented.

Several CFU units in the Blue Mountains area also participated in backburning operations assisting FRNSW and the RFS. MHP-232, MHP-050 and MHP-356 in Mount Riverview activated to ensure no wayward embers impacted on local homes during the back burning. This kind of assistance makes a huge difference and frees up frontline firefighters for other tasks. Many other units undertook impromptu drills and training days to refresh their skills and knowledge, and to better prepare their homes and streets should the bushfire impact upon them.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity arose for a handful of CFU volunteers who had lost their homes, when they met with Princess Mary and Prince Frederik. On 28 October the royal Danish couple visited the devastated Blue Mountains suburbs and met with the Premier Barry O'Farrell, NSWRFCS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, firefighters and local residents. The Prince and Princess acknowledged the communities and their tremendous effort, commending the firefighters, volunteers and residents for their formidable community spirit.

Many CFU members were the lucky recipients of this warm gesture from the Danish Royals who were very generous with their time, talking individually to each of the CFU volunteers. As many of the CFU unit members had lost their uniforms along with their homes, the CFU team helped them obtain extra jackets so they could represent FRNSW in that very special moment. For Emma Parade residents and CFU team members Julie and Michael Magennis, who had watched their street go up in smoke, the royal visit was a much-needed lift, bringing a smile to their faces after the days filled

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with grief and loss. The meeting with the Danish Royals and the Premier meant a lot to the closeknit community and boosted morale after some of the most damaging bushfires in the area in the last 20 years.

CFU involvement in the October bushfires in the Blue Mountains was featured widely in the mass media. Channel 9's Today interviewed Ian Palmer, the Team Coordinator of MHP-107 in Winmalee, and Channel 7 News broadcast an interview with Keith Ferguson, Team Member of MHP-028 in Faulconbridge and former FRNSW Captain. The royal visit to the bushfire-ravaged communities was covered by most national TV channels and newspapers, with photos of the Prince and Princess hugging CFU members seen all over Australia and Denmark.

FRNSW's new CFU team which started just a few weeks before the bushfires struck had a tough test supporting the activated units both from the field as well as from its new Harris Park office. Following the October bushfires, the CFU team is receiving an overwhelming number of enquiries on how to become a member or establish a new CFU unit. All induction training sessions scheduled until the end of 2013 were fully booked with more than 400 new CFU volunteers trained.

At present there are 126 Community Fire Units operating in the Blue Mountains area and over 600 across NSW. The units in the Blue Mountains are operated by nearly 1200 volunteers. **END**

INTERSTATE FIRIES RALLY TO SUPPORT NSW



Commissioner Mullins with MFB and QFRS crews



QFRS and MFB crews prepare to leave Sydney



Composite FRNSW/MFB crew at City of Sydney Fire Station

To bolster NSW emergency services' response during the critical 4th week of October when bushfire risk peaked, interstate assistance was provided by 10 crews from the Queensland Fire & Rescue Service (QFRS) and 10 from the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB).

The two QFRS Strike Teams and a FRNSW Strike Team were deployed at Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains to provide substantial resources to meet any further bushfire threats to the mid Mountains region. ACT Fire & Rescue appliances and crews 'backfilled' at Yass and Queanbeyan.

The MFB crews were located at various Sydney fire stations (City of Sydney, The Rocks, Silverwater, Neutral Bay, Leichhardt, Gladesville, Newtown,

Mascot, Guilford and Bondi). They attended over 60 incidents, including 45 automatic fire alarms, 6 structure fires, 5 non-structure fires, 1 hazmat incident (a chemical spill), 3 motor vehicle accidents and 2 powerlines down. The help given by the interstate crews at the time when the NSW fire services were stretched to the limit was greatly appreciated. Hundreds of rural fire volunteers from Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland also assisted the RFS. **END**

USING MEDIA TO PROMOTE FRNSW'S BUSHFIRE OPERATIONS

SUMMARY OF MEDIA COVERAGE

FRNSW achieved significant media coverage of its personnel and operations during the main bushfire crisis period (17 October to 24 October) highlighting the tremendous efforts of its workforce involved in all aspects of bushfire operations.



Traditional media

Press

152 newspaper articles were published that featured or covered FRNSW bushfire activities. These included 56 articles in metropolitan newspapers (both suburban and major metros) and 96 in regional newspapers, including several front page articles. Copies of these can be viewed on the FRNSW Intranet.

Television and radio

More than 152 radio and television stories ran that featured or covered FRNSW bushfire activities. These segments were broadcast on metro radio (40+ items), regional radio (53+ items), metro TV (40+ items) and regional TV (19+ items).

Some of the more significant interviews and TV segments were:

- A Current Affair, Channel 9, interview with SO Rod Slavic about Winmalee rescues (18/10)
- Today, Channel 9, Karl Stefanovic interviews with SO Jeff Lay and Winmalee CFU Team Coordinator Ian Palmer (18/10)
- Sunrise, Channel 7, grateful Winmalee residents thank Richmond firefighters for saving their home (21/10)
- TV3 New Zealand, Senior Firefighter Paula Raat (22/10)

- Channel 9 News, interview with Superintendent Steve Hirst (22/10)
- Channel 7 news, interview with retired Captain Keith Ferguson (22/10)
- SkyNews, Commissioner Mullins live (x2) on (23/10)
- Channel 7 Chris Bath's interviews with Chief Superintendent Ken Murphy (x2) and interview with Inspector Steve Moran (23/10) broadcast live from Lawson Fire Station
- NBN and metropolitan (Channels 7, 9 and 10) coverage of FRNSW crews at work at Dudley and Redhead – afternoon and evening news (23/10)

Social media

Twitter

twitter.com/firerescuensw

525 FRNSW tweets were issued. 4,450,000 Twitter users were reached with FRNSW Twitter posts or shares, and 5,280,000 users were reached from the #frnsw hashtag.

Facebook

www.facebook.com/frnsw

FRNSW posted and shared 292 posts. 85 were FRNSW -generated comprising 'firsthand' stories from firefighters, media team produced items, photographs and videos. Others were reposts from the RFS comprising emergency alerts and warnings.



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FRNSW posts received a total of 25,764 likes, were shared 5,845 times and were viewed 1,287,023 times.

FRNSW website fire.nsw.gov.au

FRNSW's website received 86,817 visits during the crisis and had 215,641 page views. 74.27% of visitors were new to the FRNSW website and 32,351 visitors accessed the FRNSW website via a mobile device.

Media releases

Three media releases were produced: 'Fire & Rescue NSW continues to respond to bushfire crisis' (distributed 18/10 to 420 media outlets); 'Fire & Rescue firefighters on the frontline of bushfire crisis' (distributed 21/10 to 161 media outlets) and 'Massive Fire & Rescue mobilisation for bushfire crisis' (distributed 22/10 also to 161 media outlets).

A JOURNALIST'S PERSPECTIVE



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As the armada of FRNSW tankers and pumpers rolled into the Blue Mountains during the October bushfire emergency, nestled among the convoy was the Channel Seven satellite truck searching for a place to set up. Chief Superintendent Ken Murphy, Inspector Steve Moran and Inspector Peter Nugent – in the Mountains as a task force commander and leaders – saw the Seven News crew searching for a vantage point and figured, what better place for a live news cross than outside the hub of activity – Lawson Fire Station.

“Seven needed a spot that would give viewers a sense of fire operations in the

Mountains as well as being in a position that didn’t interfere with their satellite link,” said Chief Superintendent Murphy. “We had a lot of FRNSW assets and crews deploying from Lawson, it just made sense to invite Seven to set up outside.”

Also joining the Seven News team at Lawson was Seven News presenter, Chris Bath. Throughout the day, Chris (or, ‘Bathy’ to her colleagues) would cross live from Lawson Fire Station and was joined on air throughout her broadcasts by C/Supt Murphy, Insp Moran and Insp Nugent. The FRNSW senior officers gave regular updates on the efforts of firefighters throughout the day and also

took the time to introduce – live on air – interstate firefighters from Queensland who had joined the operations in the Mountains and Greater Sydney Area.

“The media plays a critical role in keeping the community informed during an emergency, like a bushfire,” said Insp. Moran, who provided a comprehensive live interview on Seven from Lawson Fire Station. “It’s also a way of boosting community confidence in the work being done by firefighters and support agencies by showing and talking about what we’re doing, through the media.”

FROM THE NEWS DESK INTO THE DEVASTATION.

FRNSW Media caught up with Seven News presenter Chris Bath and asked about her experience covering bushfires, how the media view the role of FRNSW firefighters in a bushfire/generally, and how media during emergencies is covered in the age of instant information and audio/video/picture product.

FRNSW Media: When there’s a ‘breaking emergency’, what sort of information do newsrooms need and how quickly?

Chris Bath: Without pictures, we don’t make good television, so logistical information for our crews is vital. Obviously the sooner we can get information, the faster we can get our camera crews and reporters out there to cover it. Television takes a while to set up, especially if we are going to do a live broadcast from the scene. The sooner we know “When, Where, How, What”, the faster we can get our trucks on the road. We need to know precise information about where to send crews to get the best pictures – usually the areas where the fire is posing the greatest threat. We need to know where the fire is heading, not just for our crews, but also to let residents in danger know what’s happening. As for what we write about fire emergencies to match our pictures, there is never too much information you can give us in a fire emergency. We will take whatever information you can give us and all updates of that information as soon as you can get it to us. Media is a hungry beast. We will consume it all. Then regurgitate it, so to speak, in the nicest possible way.

FRNSW Media: How has the use of social media affected television news coverage of emergencies and ‘breaking’ news? Has social media helped or made the role of TV news reporting more challenging?

Chris Bath: Social media has had a huge effect on the way we report emergencies and breaking news, but we still have to be careful about the sources we use and verifying information before we broadcast it. The official Twitter accounts of @FRNSW and @NSWRFS were invaluable in this latest fire emergency for journalists like me on the ground. I could get reliable information immediately for broadcast. I could stay informed and be instantly briefed about the many different facets of this recent fire emergency wherever I was reporting. For an anchor, staying informed is paramount because in a live broadcast, you never know what you’re going to have to talk about and in a fast moving situation like a fire emergency, you need to stay across all the latest information. Your Twitter accounts were sensational as an in-the-field briefing resource. Used responsibly, social media is a fantastic tool.



Cmdr KEN MURPHY
NSW Fire and Rescue
NEWS
E 'MINI TORNADO' RIPS THROUGH TOWN OF ARARAT | POLITICS: FORMER FOREIGN M

FRNSW Media: As a reporter/presenter – what goes through your mind when you see images of devastation and chaos from the field from the ‘safety’ of the studio – is it hard not to get affected? Does the ‘reality’ hit hardest when you get out in the field in the following days among the ruins and shock?

Chris Bath: We’re as human as the next person, so none of us enjoys seeing suffering. Being in the studio doesn’t lessen your empathy. But like fireies, we have a job to do and you just get on with it. Being in the field gives you a more sensory experience of what’s transpired in any tragedy. The smell, the smoke, the heat, the sweat, the sense of urgency around you and to be honest, the flies looking for moisture after a fire, put you into sensory overload. Then there’s the raw emotion you witness in the field, that people often won’t show on camera. I’d be lying if I said I hadn’t ever shed a tear covering a disaster in the field or even at home after a day hosting rolling coverage in the studio.

FRNSW Media: What’s the most iconic moment you recall from the recent bushfires – what sticks in your mind as a ‘defining’ image?

Chris Bath: The thing I remember most was the incredible human spirit I saw on show. I watched residents in Winmalee helping each other out, some who’d never met, days after the fire raced through. I watched fireies, absolutely dead on their feet, retain their sense of humour and enthusiasm. I have always had a soft spot for fireies, ever since 1988 when we reporters at 2UE would fight over who went to cover fires. This latest experience with them in the Mountains, cemented their place in my mind as dead-set heroes.

FRNSW Media: You met a lot of Fire & Rescue NSW firefighters while you were in the Mountains – particularly when you did the outside broadcast from Lawson fire station – were you surprised by the response and size of the firefighting force from FRNSW (and surrounding states) that converged on Sydney during the emergency?

Chris Bath: I’m quietly proud of the firefighting force you managed to muster. It was outstanding. It was also wonderful to witness firefighters from different regions and States uniting so quickly to get on with the job. The overwhelming feeling at Lawson was that fire crews had a job to do, and they were going to do it. At no stage, did I worry about NSW not being in safe hands. It’s part of the amazing courage that I witnessed during our few days in the Mountains.

FRNSW Media: Having seen what firefighters do, what would you say if someone said to you, “I am thinking about becoming a firefighter with Fire & Rescue NSW, should I do it?” If you answer ‘yes’, why? How would you ‘sell’ the job to someone?

Chris Bath: I’d say: “Do you want a job where you can save the world and help yourself at the same time? Do you want to go home and feel a sense of pride and satisfaction with your work? Do you want to be part of a team that can accomplish a mission with a minimum of fuss? Do you want to stay incredibly fit? Are you a “can-do-get-on-with-the-job-without-the-bulldust” kind of person? Do you want to be widely respected and adored by sane citizens? You need to be a firefighter.”

THROUGH THE LENS INTO THE FIRE:

Interview with Paul Walker, Channel 7 Senior Camera Operator.

In an era of powerful handheld technology it really is little wonder the humble mobile phone has become very ‘smart’. New smartphones carry powerful cameras, capable of capturing high resolution images and video that can be instantly emailed to newsrooms around the world. Any wonder that in a ‘breaking news’ environment like a bushfire emergency, citizen journalists/camera operators contribute so much to the news cycle we see and hear.

Even with citizen journalism so prevalent in mainstream media, the craft and skill of traditional television news camera operators and newspaper photographers still influences our thoughts, emotions and opinions of a news story. A lot of media coverage of FRNSW during the October bushfire emergency was captured by professionals, such as Senior News Camera Operator for the Seven Network, Paul Walker, a 30-year veteran of TV news.

FRNSW Media spent some time with Paul to get a sense of what news gatherers do in an emergency like a bushfire and how they get those amazing pictures.

FRNSW Media: As a senior camera operator, you are often in the ‘thick of it’ – where were you working during the bushfire emergency, 17 to 23 October?

Paul Walker: On day one of this bushfire emergency, after a stint at the Port Stephens fire the week before, I covered the Bargo/Balmoral fires in the Southern Highlands and ended up at the Redhead/Dudley fires near Newcastle where I worked closely with FRNSW crews.

That blaze threatened numerous properties, but not a single home was lost thanks to the firefighting efforts. I recall the smoke being so thick that crews at the fire front had to wear BA as they fought the flames.

FRNSW Media: What do you do when you get to the fireground as a camera operator? What are you looking for, what do you need (from firefighters/incident controller/media team)?

Paul Walker: Even before I get to a fireground there is plenty to do. While in transit I'm talking with our Operations Desk about the fire event, finding out if a fire command post has been established and if we have other crews in the area, also whether our Seven News helicopter and/or satellite truck are in the area, and what they're experiencing.

If our helicopter has been tasked to the event, I'll talk directly with the flight crew about the potential best places to go and the fastest route to the fire in regard to any hazards. I also give FRNSW Media a call to gauge the size of the fire and the FRNSW response. When I arrive on scene there's only one thing I'm looking for; the best pictures and access to them! If the terrain or smoke reduces my ability to find the best location, I'm looking for a RED Helmet.

In terms of what I need from FRNSW on the ground, it's important to quickly cultivate a trusting relationship with the fire crews on the ground in a short space of time. While I appreciate this trust has to be earned, I also believe the vast majority of my colleagues are professional and most of them will do the right thing, if entrusted to do so.

FRNSW Media: Do you feel safe when you're working on the fireground? What precautions do you take to protect yourself?

Paul Walker: As a news camera operator with nearly 30 years' experience, and having attended more than 1000 fire calls working as a retained firefighter (1990-95) at FRNSW Station 72 Merrylands, I feel as safe as any cameraman can feel – while respecting the volatile and dynamic nature of any fire situation.

Not all media on the ground have the benefit of this much experience, and I tell them to adopt a crew, whose intel and observations you can rely on to keep you safe while you're getting the shots. In terms of precautions, most full-time media working in the field are issued with PPE kits, with the understanding it is compulsory to wear these on any fireground.

FRNSW Media: What was the most iconic moment for you during the recent bushfire emergency – what images (you saw, or captured yourself) left the greatest impression in your mind?

Paul Walker: The most iconic moment was not one I personally shot, or saw in the flesh, but was an image shot in the Blue Mountains that aired on Seven News the afternoon Winmalee ignited.

It was a poignant moment, where a cameraman was urging a homeowner to flee the scene because there was nothing more he could do. The image was filled with smoke, the homeowner was dirty and distressed, and after a lot of nudging, took the cameraman's advice to leave. It was a dramatic moment, creating empathy in our viewers and rare insight into an average Australian's heartbreaking decisions when the family home is under threat of being impacted by fire.

FRNSW Media: You've been a senior camera operator for a number of years and no doubt filmed some significant bushfire emergencies, was this one the worst?

Paul Walker: By any measure, the recent loss of more than 200 homes has to be considered one of the worst. Our Seven News coverage demonstrated how modern newsgathering technology enables us to inform viewers in real-time about fire emergencies, warnings and advice.

However, in terms of the spectacle of fire, nothing I have shot compares with the 2001 Black Christmas bushfires that ravaged New South Wales. The loss of homes was less than those of the recent Winmalee fire, but it was the longest continuous bushfire emergency in NSW, pushing the endurance of my colleagues and I, and our capacity to cover the event.

The 1994 bushfires that ringed Sydney are also a standout, given fires burnt right to the middle of metropolitan Sydney, and so many people were in imminent danger. This fire was also the catalyst for a huge 'retooling' of the NSWRFs.

FRNSW Media: As a senior camera operator for a number of years, how have you found working with Fire & Rescue NSW crews at jobs, like the bushfires?

Paul Walker: I have always felt a strong kinship with firefighters, since I was once one of them.

A standard fire scene in metropolitan Sydney is a lot more confined and rigid – shopkeepers, residents, witnesses and other emergency services fill the space around fire crews, tape is put up, and for that reason the situation needs to be more controlled.

Bushfires are different. In such a setting, there is much more of a sense of camaraderie between media and fire crews. We are side by side, with a shared exposure to danger, but also a lot freer to

it's important to quickly cultivate a trusting relationship with the fire crews on the ground in a short space of time

move around and shoot what we need as long as we don't get in the way.

FRNSW Media: What advice do you give to younger/less experienced reporters and camera operators when they are working in the field in or near bushfires/structure fires?

Paul Walker: Firstly, no picture or story is worth your life.

Also, it is important to build immediate rapport with the incident controller and other firefighters on scene not only to understand the nature of what you're shooting, but to let them know you will not be interfering with their job. This is crucial; fire crews will only respect the job you have to do if you have a clear understanding and respect of theirs.

It is also important to make sure they have their PPE ready to go and to wear it in a bushfire situation, and to be well informed at all times for their own safety, as well as for news gathering. Finally, you need to make sure your newsroom knows where you are and the dangers you are exposed to.

FRNSW Media: Does it make your role – and the role of camera operators and reporters – a little easier working with the FRNSW Media Team?

Paul Walker: Absolutely. Generally speaking, a FRNSW media team member will, more often than not, know the cameraman or reporter they are dealing with – know their competence, understanding, integrity and can vouch for them in situations where others do not know them.

One such example happened to me at Redhead during the last bushfire crisis. The reporter and I were having trouble negotiating our way through a roadblock. We contacted Superintendent Ian Krimmer and were fortunate enough to learn he was actually in the area. Ian not only vouched for us and enabled us to pass, he also advised us of the fire conditions, where the best shots could be had and, most importantly, using his 38 years of fire experience, took us inside the middle of the fireground to take the best shots. Without this, our viewers would not get a true appreciation of what FRNSW firefighters experience.

Paul Walker shares his images from the fireground with the FRNSW Media Team via his personal Twitter account [@apdwnews](#). ■■■■ END



THANKS FOR AN AWESOME EFFORT!



OUR LEADERS VISIT

Before and after the October bushfires, firefighters and volunteers received visits and heartfelt messages of thanks from political leaders and royalty.

On 18 October, as bushfires continued to rage and the day after a 63-year-old man died while defending his home on the Central Coast, Prime Minister Tony Abbott visited one of the worst affected firegrounds, Winmalee, in the lower Blue Mountains. Mr Abott delivered this message of thanks to firefighters and volunteers:

"How proud we are of the thousands of volunteers and full-time professionals who are out there keeping our community safe on a difficult day," he said. "I just want to say how sorry we are, on behalf of the people and the Parliament of

Australia, for the heartache which so many hundreds of people in NSW are currently dealing with."

Her Majesty Elizabeth II expressed her admiration for those battling the bushfires in NSW, and sent her sympathies to all those who suffered loss.

"I would like to convey my heartfelt sympathies to all those who have been affected by the devastating bushfires across New South Wales," the Queen said in her message. "My thoughts are with the many people who have lost their homes or livelihoods in the fires and I have the greatest admiration for the firefighters, volunteers and emergency services officers who are working tirelessly to control the situation."

Firefighters also earned heartfelt thanks and congratulations from the Governor-General, the Hon Quentin Bryce AC CVO, as she toured fire-ravaged communities throughout the Blue Mountains on October 25.

"Everyone is so appreciative," Ms Bryce said. "They are heroes and the world has certainly been watching." The Governor-General personally greeted dozens of Fire & Rescue NSW and volunteer firefighters from nearby Winmalee to thank them for their efforts.

On 27 October, just 10 days on from the massively destructive bushfires, the grief-stricken residents of Winmalee were given a reason to smile with the visit of

the Danish Royal couple, Crown Prince Frederik and Tasmania's own Crown Princess Mary.

"It's hard to see the effects of the devastating fire and the people that are standing here today that have lost their homes, but the most important thing is that people have their lives," the Princess said. "The work of all of them, the firemen, the volunteers, the people from the community all doing their bit is just incredible and such a testament to the spirit of this community".

She and Crown Prince Frederik extended sympathy to those who had suffered extraordinary losses and offered thanks to those who had fought so hard during the crisis. The couple met with NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons to tour the local RFS station. There was a standing ovation as Mary thanked the men and women who worked tirelessly to bring the blazes under control.

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell also added his thanks to firefighters for their hard work in fighting the bushfire emergency.

"This is what community is about; people coming together in times of crisis. Members of this brigade have lost homes and they're still out fighting fires. They're putting the interests of the community first," Mr O'Farrell added. **END**



Danish Royal couple, Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary meet FRNSW firefighters and CFU members'

SOCIAL MEDIA

FRNSW received hundreds of messages of thanks from the community for its work fighting the bushfires. Here are a brief sample – to see all the messages, visit FRNSW's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Twitter



Mandy
@Dakoda009



GOD BLESS our fire fighters ambos SES front line service workers and volunteers THANKYOU for saving our house
17 Oct 13



Jill Hall
@JillHallMP



Thank you to all the fire fighters & emergency workers fighting fires in our area & through out the state
17 Oct 13



Sam
@HoldOnAngel



Fire is out and the trucks are gone. Thank you to all the firemen that put out the fire. You are truly brave men and women!
17 Oct 13



The Today Show
@thetodayshow



Thank you to all the fire crews & volunteers who are putting their own lives on the line to help others, you are heroes #nswfires
18 Oct 13



702 ABC Sydney
@702sydney



To the thousands of @nswrfs & @firerescueNSW fire fighters and volunteers....thank you. Sydney is proud of you.
18 Oct 13



Catholic Education
@CatholicEdParra



Huge thank you to the NSW fire rescue services on site at St Thomas
18 Oct 13



Adroit Fight Gear
@AdroitBoxingMMA



Big shout out to all the fire fighters and emergency personal battling the blazes out here in NSW, thank you very much
18 Oct 13



Mary Wooldridge MP
@Mary_Wooldridge



Thoughts are w/ our neighbours in NSW fighting the #bushfires. A big thank you to fire fighters, emergency personnel & volunteers
18 Oct 13



Wentworth Falls CC
@wfccgolf



Please help us thank the NSW Fire and Rescue teams who have been absolutely amazing in these past few days
24 Oct 13

Facebook



Emilie Deacon
Facebook message



Thankyou to the firefighters who saved our home last night. We have nothing but admiration and gratitude for your efforts from the guy who assured us as we were evacuated that he'd take care of our home, to those who gave our kids Minties to quell their fear. The police and firefighters at Heatherbrae did an awesome job and are to be commended.
18 Oct 13



Cheryl Nugent
Facebook message



Thank you - for helping protect my friends and family and home town. Words cant express how grateful everyone is - stay safe and return home soon. You are all heroes.
24 Oct 13



Rayann Gina
Facebook message



A big thank you to all the fire fighter's, the volunteers everybody who worked so hard to save lives and homes. No words can appreciate all the efforts you guys put in on a daily basis. So much respect for all of you.
21 Oct 13





HELPING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES RECOVER

WARRAGAMBA FIRIES AND FAMILIES HELP OUT



Warragamba FRNSW firefighters and their families, with the assistance of Warragamba Public School, recently held a donation drive for toiletry items for Springwood families affected by the bushfires. These items were donated to the Salvation Army/Baptist Church at Springwood for distribution to those in need. The hearts of the Warragamba firefighters went out to those in the Blue Mountains who lost their homes during the bushfires and they wanted to show their support. **END**

FRNSW Facebook, 6/11

AIDING THE RECOVERY EFFORT

Donations

If you want to donate to help bushfire victims, several major bushfire appeals have been set up:

SALVATION ARMY ☎ 13 72 58 (13 SALVOS) 📍 salvos.org.au

RED CROSS ☎ 1800 811 700 📍 redcross.org.au/disaster-relief-and-recovery.aspx

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY ☎ 13 18 12 📍 vinnies.org.au/home-nsw

BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL MAYORAL RELIEF FUND

📍 <http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/yourcouncil/mayoralbushfirerelieffund>

Disaster assistance

Where FRNSW staff and CFU volunteers are seeking to provide advice to fire victims in their local community or have been personally impacted themselves by bushfires, information about a range of assistance programs is available on the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services website.

📍 emergency.nsw.gov.au/currentemergencies/bushfires

Employee assistance

FRNSW runs a range of programs to help employees affected by traumatic incidents to which they respond. These include:

- Critical Incident Support Program, offering services including one-to-one assistance, on-scene support and followup, and education and information sessions
- Employee Assistance Program, giving access to confidential professional 24-hour counselling services
- Chaplains providing counselling and support.

For more information, see the Wellbeing section on the Intranet.

📍 home:81/health/wellbeing



CITY RUMBLES

with new horn and siren

Fire appliances at City of Sydney Fire Station are making themselves heard through the streets of Sydney with new air horns and new sirens.

The new air horn was launched in August on the Flyer as part of a multi-agency push to encourage drivers not to obstruct responding emergency vehicles. At the launch, Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher and Commissioner Mullins joined with other emergency services representatives in urging drivers to move out of the way of emergency vehicles travelling under lights and sirens.

"Seconds count in an emergency. If an emergency vehicle is approaching and is sounding an alarm or showing flashing lights, drivers must move to the

left and out of the path of the vehicle," Minister Gallacher said. "An obstructed journey can be the difference between life and death."

Commissioner Mullins said the new horns and sirens were being installed to further alert drivers of the need to move out of the way. "Fire appliances can weigh up to 15 tonnes and can be carrying 2000 litres of water when en route to an emergency. It can be hard for a fire appliance to stop or move quickly if a driver or pedestrian does not move out of the way," Commissioner Mullins said. "We've introduced the new air horns to encourage drivers and pedestrians to move out of the way safely and to help improve our response times."

The new air horns are from the USA and are specifically tuned for emergency service vehicles. They are no louder than the old horns. They do, however, have a distinctive sound making them very effective in drawing the attention of nearby drivers and pedestrians.

The new siren – known as the 'rumbler' – gives a 20-second burst of

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fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews

OR

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low frequency noise, in tandem with the normal siren. It has been installed on the Runner. Superintendent Ian Krimmer said the new siren was felt rather than heard. "It is designed for short bursts when approaching busy intersections," Superintendent Krimmer said. "It's useful when nearby drivers have their windows closed, air-conditioning on and stereo turned up. We are hoping the new horns and sirens will further draw the attention of drivers and pedestrians to appliances travelling in emergency situations."

The new siren is being trialled while the new air horns are being installed on some existing and all new appliances.

END

NEW TEAM SUPPORTS CFUS



CFU Manager Samantha Colwell meets with CFU members

After almost 20 successful years serving NSW, our Community Fire Units (CFUs) are now supported by a new dedicated team.

A new section within FRNSW has been created to support the work of CFU volunteers and the firefighters who assist them.

The CFU program was established following the devastating Sydney bushfires in 1994. It involves teams of local residents who live in urban bushland areas across NSW, and are trained and equipped by FRNSW to prepare themselves, their families and their properties for the bushfire season.

The program has expanded over the years to over 600 units and more than 7,000 volunteer members throughout metropolitan and regional NSW. Its

main aims are to increase community preparation and resilience to bushfires and other emergencies, and to provide basic training and firefighting equipment to aid in protecting property. The program also engages local communities in basic hazard reduction, fire safety and prevention activities; empowers residents in urban bushland areas through education, training and resourcing; and increases the community's knowledge of bushfire behaviour in their local areas.

Until recently, the CFUs were managed by FRNSW's Bushfire Section. However, the successful growth of the program over the years had outstripped the capacity of Bushfire Officers to support it to the extent required.

The new team will support the FRNSW stations that work closely with the individual CFUs, particularly in the leadup to summer each year. It will also inject much-needed energy and resources into the CFUs. The initial focus will be on training, including skills maintenance training for existing volunteers and induction training for new recruits.

"Our long-term vision for volunteer training is to develop a blended learning environment," said the section's new Manager, Samantha Colwell. "This will combine online learning for theoretical components with face-to-face practical sessions."

Ms Colwell comes to the section after 18 months as Manager of ComSafe, FRNSW's commercial safety training unit. She has also had considerable experience in community-based emergency services, having volunteered for a number of years with both the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

In the coming months and years, CFU volunteers and FRNSW stations will reap the benefits in terms of assistance with training and increased communication. The new section will also investigate potential sources of public funding for additional resources to support volunteer skills and leadership training. **END**

Broadway

**HAZMAT
INCIDENT**



Chemical spill forces 5,000 to evacuate

24 OCT **11:00**

Just before 1100 hours on Thursday 24 October, firefighters responded to a hazmat incident at the University of Technology Sydney campus in Ultimo. When crews from Glebe, Alexandria's pumper and heavy hazmat arrived, they were informed that two 500 gram bottles of picric acid had been exposed to air and crystallised.

The picric acid was stored in a dangerous goods cupboard in a laboratory in a lower level of the main building. The brightly coloured acid has a number of uses in the laboratory and is normally quite stable. However picric acid, a highly energetic material closely related to the better known explosive TNT (trinitrotoluene), becomes highly unstable in a crystallised state and even moving the container could cause an explosive reaction.

An exclusion zone was set up and more than 5,000 students were immediately evacuated from towers

1-4 of the UTS campus. The threat forced the closure of Broadway in both directions between Harris Street and Regent Street at Chippendale. The area of the spill was isolated and the NSW Police Bomb Squad was called in to assist.

Just after 1215 hours, Police Bomb Squad technicians safely removed the chemical in explosion-proof containers and removed it from the premises. Two FRNSW appliances escorted the bomb squad to a nearby rifle range and stood by for fire protection while they disposed of it.

END



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fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews

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NEW SMARTPHONE APP TO HELP PEOPLE IN EMERGENCIES

Emergency+ is a smartphone application that will help ensure all people in Australia are able to call the right number to get help in an emergency, and to understand what's required of them when they make that call.

Launched in December 2013, the app was developed by the Triple Zero Awareness Work Group (TZAWG), a national body that represents emergency call-taking agencies and their Government and industry partners throughout Australia.

An original prototype of the app was built with initial funding from FRNSW and 360 Entertainment, a software developer that also created the highly successful Triple Zero Kids' Challenge children's safety game. Subsequent development costs have been covered by a National Emergency Management Project grant from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

The app was developed in response to a number of problems experienced by emergency call-takers and emergency services officers. TZAWG identified that more than 65% of incoming calls to Triple Zero are now made from mobile phones. However, mobile callers often do not know exactly where they are, meaning that call-processing times are longer and call-takers are then unavailable to take the next incoming emergency call. Without an accurate location, emergency services personnel are also unable to dispatch resources, or their arrival on the scene is delayed.

In addition, research has shown that many people don't know the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) or Police Assistance Line (PAL) numbers. As a result, people often ring Triple Zero instead, needlessly tying up emergency call-takers.

The Emergency+ app uses the existing GPS functionality of smartphones to enable callers to give emergency call-takers their accurate location. It includes SES and PAL numbers as options, so non-emergency calls are made to the most appropriate number. In addition, the app's information page includes details of other relevant national numbers, such as Crime Stoppers and Healthdirect Australia. When activated, the built-in accessibility features of a smartphone will even describe aloud what appears on-screen, so a caller can even use the app without seeing it.

As part of the roll-out of the Emergency+ app, a short training video was developed by TZAWG for emergency services call-takers. The video explains how the app works and how to assist a Triple Zero caller who has used the app to provide their smartphone's GPS co-ordinates, thus enabling quicker response of emergency resources. **END**



eAIRS: better, easier and making a difference

FRNSW is introducing a new and improved Australian Incident Reporting System (eAIRS) that better captures firefighter intelligence.

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fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews

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Firefighters play a critical role in incident management at the scene and also afterwards through accurate information capture. Intelligence gathered by firefighters at an incident is entered into a system called the Australian Incident Reporting System (AIRS). This allows other firefighters to use this data to develop action plans to better prepare and protect their communities, thereby reducing the impact of fires and other emergency incidents. FRNSW also uses this information to improve training and equipment, identify fire trends and develop action plans to address them, educate the community in safe fire practices, and also to justify budget bids.

Contrary to popular thinking, this data doesn't just fall into a big black hole or end up as landfill. Every day at 0800 hours, all data gathered from the previous 24-hour period is sent as a FireCom report to FRNSW's Fire Investigation and Research Unit (FIRU). This is then carefully scrutinised, compared and cross-referenced by a team of fire researchers and investigators. For example, did you know that FRNSW attended 28,725 fires and explosions last year? Data from all these incidents was collected by around 1,000 Station Officers and Captains from 337 different fire stations. This intelligence was entered into AIRS and stored on a FRNSW server.

Firefighters have described the present AIRS tool as clunky, difficult to use, not intuitive and an onerous system where a lot of information is required to be entered. The good news is that a project is underway to replace the existing AIRS application and bring a new improved version into the eOB (eOccurrence Book) Portal,

thereby reducing the number of systems firefighters use to record information and capture quality information.

An AIRS Consulting Group made up of Station Officers and Captains from both Regional and Metropolitan areas, with specialist support personnel, has been established. Its major purpose is to provide critical input into the right AIRS design solution for all users.

The redesigned AIRS will be easier to use, with simplified and streamlined processes of capturing incident information. It will provide better access to reporting and improved quality of data and statistics on FRNSW's workload and performance to both internal parties and external parties (ie government and the community).

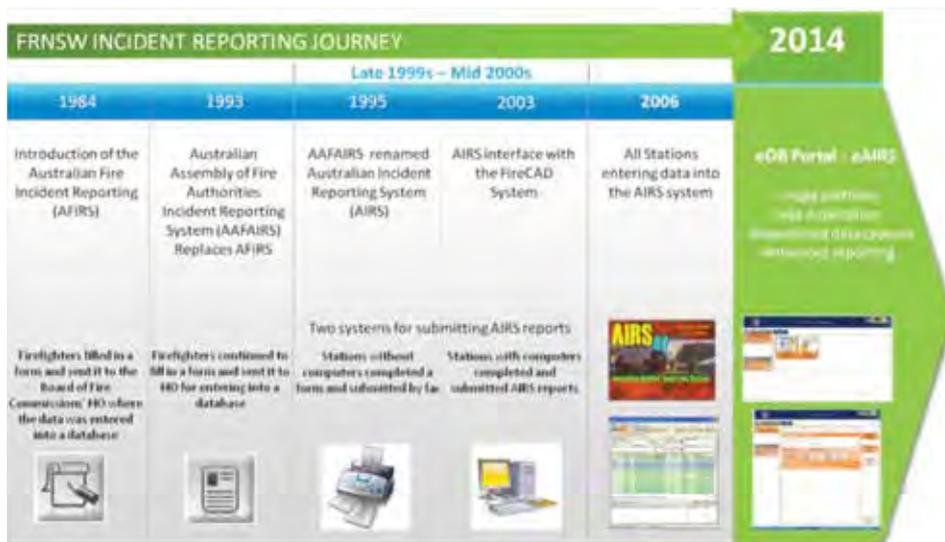
The new and improved eAIRS system is due to be rolled out mid-2014.

Firefighters play a critical role in AIRS data capture and intelligence gathering

Although it may seem trivial, the information firefighters gather at the scene and document in AIRS (and soon in the new eAIRS) is instrumental in helping FRNSW identify trends and may form part of a much bigger picture. Even though a fire may have been minor and easily extinguished, the potential impact on community safety may be much greater.

Firefighters should obtain as much relevant information from the occupant or owner as possible. The intelligence firefighters provide is central to changing unsafe patterns of behaviour, recalling faulty appliances, assisting with legislation change and making our community safer. **END**

AIRS – Getting better all the time



28,725

Fires and explosions attended in 2012

1,000

Station Officers & Captains collected data

337

Different fire stations submitted data

AIRS success stories

Intelligence sparks massive electrical recall

In March 2013, FIRU received a fire safety concern from Station Officer David Gill from Glebe Fire Station, who attended a fire involving a Samsung washing machine. He provided the make and model number to FIRU, which forwarded this and other information from AIRS to NSW Fair Trading.

In early April, FIRU noticed another Samsung fire from a scan of the overnight comms log and contacted Macksville Captain Bill Lenthall who arranged to forward further details and photos from the incident. FIRU then conducted an AIRS search into washing machine fires for the previous 12 months and found a further five incidents involving faulty Samsung washing machines.

In late April, FIRU was notified by Station Officer Peter Kovacs about another Samsung washing machine fire in Glebe. It involved the same model as those identified in the previous fires. Again, this intelligence was passed on to NSW Fair Trading.

On 30 April, Samsung informed NSW Fair Trading that it would recall this make of washing machine. It was the biggest electrical recall in Australian history, involving over 150,000 appliances.

Mandatory residential smoke alarms

In 2005, FIRU and CSIRO undertook a joint research venture, the Safer Houses Project. This world class research led to a greater understanding of the changes to the residential built environment and the increased danger from flashover in compartment fires due to the changing nature of building contents and structure. The research, along with data from AIRS, provided evidence that drove changes to legislation in May 2006, making it mandatory to install residential smoke alarms.

Improved transport of dangerous goods

FRNSW and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) worked together to

analyse statistical information about the transport of dangerous goods. They looked at patterns at MVAs and other transport accidents to determine regulatory concerns. This resulted in a current regulatory campaign developed by EPA and supported by the NSW Police Force to check for correct labelling, placarding and material safety data sheet availability to alert emergency service personnel about the load.

Reduced arson attacks on schools

In 2002, FIRU initiated the Schools Fires Project, which identified that certain schools were at high risk of arson attack. This led to creation of a joint Working Committee with representatives from the Department of Education, NSW Police and FRNSW. The Committee shared intelligence from AIRS and other sources regarding school arson, and developed better methodologies for targeting schools to prevent deliberate or accidental fire. As a result, arson attacks on schools have reduced from 85 in 2001/02 to 10 in 2011/12 (data sourced from the NSW Government Self Insurance Fund).

Recall of 28,000 faulty dishwashers

In 2008, FIRU identified an emerging trend in dishwasher fires and provided this evidence from AIRS to NSW Fair Trading. This resulted in recall of 28,000 faulty dishwashers in Australia and another 3,000 in New Zealand.

Fire dangers in ceiling insulation

Through information from AIRS and from the frontline, FIRU identified an increase in household ceiling fires involving cellulose fibre insulation. Action was taken through NSW Fair Trading in 2009 who informed the then Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. This led to the Department introducing certification requirements for installers of insulation and eventually cancelling the Home Insulation Rebate Scheme.

Improved design and management of major hazard facilities

FRNSW and WorkCover work

collaboratively on managing major hazard facilities. The two organisations have collectively reviewed statistical information to determine the frequency of incidents and the effectiveness of emergency plans designed to combat those incidents. This information has helped in designing the next generation of facilities and improving emergency services interaction during incidents at these facilities.

Mandatory sprinklers in nursing homes

The Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire in November 2011 resulted in the largest loss of life in a fire in NSW for over 30 years. Following the initial fire investigation, FIRU conducted a series of four research burns at the FRNSW facility at Londonderry. The findings from these research burns, and the data collected from AIRS, led to the Department of Planning changing legislation to mandate sprinklers in all nursing homes in NSW.

New wheat bags standard reduces the risk of house fires

Wheat bags are well known to fire services as a potential cause of fires. A fire death in September 2011 led to a Coronial Inquest in April 2013, to which FIRU provided data from AIRS regarding fires initiated by wheat bags. The Deputy Coroner made several recommendations, one of which was creation of an Australian Standard on Wheat Bags. FIRU is now working with NSW Fair Trading and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to develop this Standard.

Ban imposed on indoor LPG-fuelled cabinet heaters

In 2010, FIRU became aware of a number of fires involving portable indoor cabinet heaters fuelled by 9 kg LPG cylinders. Investigation revealed that these heaters did not comply with the Australian Standards for either indoor or outdoor use (AS 4553/AS 4565). Data from AIRS led to NSW Fair Trading banning these products in 2010 and assisted in action taken against vendors selling these products.

HOUSE BURNS AT GILGANDRA AID RESEARCH

Fire investigators from across the country and New Zealand converged on the town of Gilgandra from 29 July to 2 August for a series of live research burns.



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fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews



OR
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The live burns provided ongoing skills maintenance for fire investigators, a controlled training environment for FRNSW retained crews and trainers, and a controlled environment in which external agencies and organisations conducted testing and research on a range of topics.

The week began with two bedroom fires, followed by a series of floor burns where the K9 unit demonstrated the effectiveness of the detector dogs in sniffing out accelerants. There was also a series of sprinkler tests, a roof fire, and kitchen and living room fires.

Organisers Station Officers Morgan Cook and Phil Etienne said the live research burns were an invaluable opportunity to capture fire modelling and research data from a number of different scenarios.

“Long term, this will help improve fire investigation techniques as well as firefighting techniques,” SO Cook said. “This is a great opportunity to do field-based research rather than lab-based

“This is a great opportunity to do field-based research rather than lab-based research. We’re usually coming in at the end of a fire, so it’s great to get a good understanding of where it starts and how it takes hold.”

research. We’re usually coming in at the end of a fire, so it’s great to get a good understanding of where it starts and how it takes hold.”

SO Etienne said they observed fire behaviour and smoke patterns, and gained a greater understanding of how temperatures increase.

“This helps with both fire investigation and fire prevention. We computer modelled the burns that we did and that will influence our safety messages and how we fight fires. It will also improve how we, as investigators, understand fire

behaviour,” said SO Etienne. “By creating a fire scenario and observing how the fire progresses, we learned a whole lot more about fire behaviour and the effectiveness of our firefighting techniques.”

Representatives from fire authorities across the country and New Zealand attended the burns, as did forensic police and members of the arson squad. Representatives of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and a number of universities were also present. **END**

FIRU

protecting the
community with
intelligence



FRNSW's Fire Investigation and Research Unit (FIRU) is home to a dynamic team of professionals who investigate fires, train others in fire investigation techniques and undertake research into the nature of fires.

Since its formation in 1987, the Unit's focus has been on gathering information on undetermined fires and providing specialist fire investigation services.

When the research function was added in 1998, this focus broadened to include high level research on human behaviour, building behaviour and fire behaviour. FIRU has since added the Accelerant Detection Canine Team to provide further specialist support and has embarked on a program of joint research with various universities and CSIRO.

The disciplines of fire investigation and research both rely on collecting accurate information and converting that into usable knowledge or 'fire intelligence'. This provides FRNSW with an accurate timely situational awareness of the relationship between fire victims, their environments and the actual fire.

This situational awareness is vital, as it enables FIRU to quickly recommend changes that improve the health and safety of firefighters. It also helps to communicate risks to the community and provides government agencies with evidence that enables them to address issues such as faulty or dangerous products. In many cases, this evidence has contributed to changes in legislation and building codes.

FIRU's methods of gathering fire intelligence have changed over the years. Investigation originally involved paper forms and 35mm film photography. A decade ago, the unit spent \$8,000 per year for film processing and took an average 36 photos per incident (the number of exposures on a standard film roll). While this was valuable, analysis was difficult

and slow, and the situational awareness derived was soon out of date.

Since 2005, FIRU has been 'digital'. Data is entered electronically, including digital photos (sometimes over 100 high-resolution photos per incident). The unit now gathers more fire intelligence per investigation than ever, and where FIRU cannot attend a fire, it relies on intelligence entered into AIRS by Station Officers and Captains.

"New technology has enabled quicker, better analysis of fire intelligence, and software tools continue to improve as has our understanding of using analysis for positive outcomes," said Chief Supt Chris Lewis, Assistant Director Community Safety and Research. "It's worth emphasising that high-level situational awareness is only half the story. Thorough fire investigation is pointless if the information gathered is not applied to solving problems, and FIRU has used fire intelligence to achieve major problem-solving outcomes."

The Unit is also working with universities to design and implement even better tools for analysing fire incidents, gathering fire intelligence and communicating it as usable knowledge.

FIRU is involved with the latest changes to AIRS to ensure that the system is easier to use, more targeted and more accurate. This will lead to even better evidence-based decision-making that will support wider organisational planning and will assist in building a proactive fire service culture that manages risk instead of simply reacting to the consequences of that risk. ■■■ END



Sydney

**FIRE
INCIDENT**



Highrise blaze at Centennial Park

10 OCT 15:59



VIEW VIDEO AT
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews



OR
SCAN CODE TO
WATCH NOW



Firefighters rescued a man from a stairwell during a fire on the top floor of an 8-storey unit block near Centennial Park on the afternoon of Thursday 10 October.

At 1559 hours firefighters responded to Cook Road, Centennial Park following multiple Triple Zero calls from residents, some many kilometres away, who reported seeing large flames from the roof of a unit block. While en route, crews were also informed of a possible person trapped.

On arrival crews reported large, wind driven flames visible from the penthouse area of an 8-storey apartment block that contained 57 residential units. The incident was upgraded to a 4th Alarm including

three aerial appliances. Firefighters quickly rescued one man from the stairwell and then began to aggressively attack the fire from both the fire floor and using the aerials. They were able to quickly contain the fire which was fanned by the strong afternoon wind, and prevented it from penetrating the internal structure of the building. The fire severely damaged a large timber pergola and barbecue area on the top floor. No-one was injured during the incident.

END



Watagan State Forest & Leppington

RESCUE



Toronto firefighters rescue Rocky, the Great Dane



Toronto firefighters rescue Rocky, the Great Dane



Buster is rescued from the drain where he was trapped

Top dog rescues

23 & 26 OCT

FRNSW rescue operators were forced to use all their skills and knowledge during two difficult dog rescues.

The first was a Great Dane, Rocky, who fell from a cliff in the Watagan State Forest on 23 October. Toronto firefighters were called to the scene at 1030 hours and one firefighter was lowered over the edge in the dark. When he reached the end of the 50m life rescue line, he could still hear the dog barking in the dark 30m below.

SO Tim Brown studied a satellite map, and when firefighters returned the next morning, they decided to

access the cliff base from below. The Toronto tanker was able to get the crew down a fire trail then four firefighters made a demanding 5-hour trek through thick scrub up the mountain to the base of the cliff. Using Rocky's bark as a guide, they located the dog on a narrow ledge below an 80m cliff. Firefighters managed to get a lead on Rocky who proved to be one tough dog and after 18 hours in the bush, were able to walk him back down the mountain to his very happy owners.

On 26 October, Bonnyrigg Heights, Liverpool and UASR specialists spent more than two hours rescuing Buster, a 16-year-old deaf Cavalier

King Charles Spaniel who became trapped down a 150mm drain at a Leppington property.

Firefighters used concrete-cutting tools to dig down to the pipe before gently breaking the pipe away to release the dog. They then used tubes to feed oxygen to Buster during the ordeal and immediately gave him oxygen therapy after his release. Throughout the rescue, an RSPCA officer and a local vet were on hand to offer advice and assistance.

END



International information gathering boosts our emergency response capabilities

Whenever FRNSW officers travel overseas and observe emergency services practices in other countries, they return with vital information that enhances the organisation's capabilities.

A number of officers and executives have travelled to international destinations this year, with most of these trips either fully or partially funded by other national or overseas bodies.

Benefits from these experiences have included opportunities to present papers at significant conferences, conduct research, identify benchmarks with which to compare current best practices, and assist with training provided by emergency management agencies. In addition, FRNSW has enhanced its reputation as a world class organisation and established close links with international fire and emergency services agencies.

In June, for example, Inspector Craig Wright and Station Officer Graeme Turnbull travelled to New Zealand to attend a full-scale test at the Royal New Zealand Navy ship firefighting facility in Auckland. In October, both officers drew on this experience when they undertook pivotal roles in FRNSW's planning and preparation for the International Fleet Review, which saw 40 different warships visiting Sydney Harbour.

FRNSW was tasked with responding to any fires or incidents occurring on these ships, in partnership with Sydney Ports Corporation and the Royal Australian Navy.

Most international trips undertaken recently by FRNSW officers have related to urban search and rescue (USAR) practices, in particular International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) activities.

In March, Chief Superintendent Paul McGuiggan and Superintendents David Lewis and Greg Wild travelled to Switzerland to participate in a major disaster exercise as part of an Australian team at the request of the Swiss Government.

In June, Chief Superintendent John Denny and Station Officer Clayton Abel also travelled to Switzerland. Chief Superintendent Denny attended the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group meeting and SO Abel attended the INSARAG Training Working Group meeting.

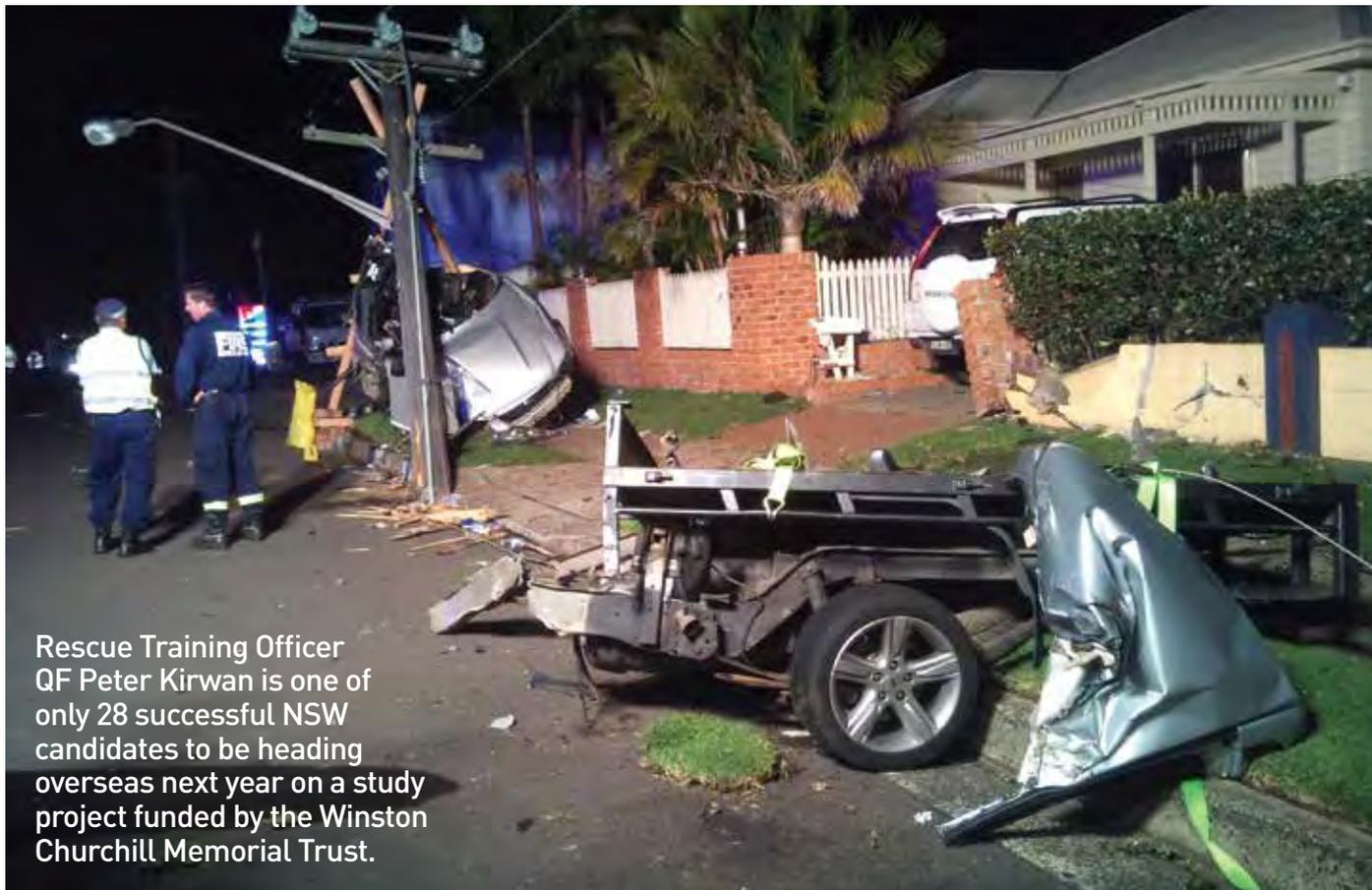
In September, Deputy Commissioner Jim Smith, Chief Superintendents Paul McGuiggan and Gary Picken, and

Superintendent Brian Smart attended the INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting in The Hague, the Netherlands. The annual meeting enables international USAR team leaders to exchange information about technical issues, and to discuss best practice and possible improvements in areas of interest.

Also in September, Commissioner Mullins and Chief Superintendent John Denny travelled to Singapore with AusAid officials to represent Australia at two days of meetings of the Asia-Pacific chapter of INSARAG.

FRNSW recently achieved international accreditation for its Heavy USAR Task Force. Its personnel are often asked by AusAid to provide and participate in training exercises. FRNSW is also part of a global network for response to overseas emergencies and has responded to many such events in the past. Both FRNSW and the NSW Government support AusAid and the Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs in providing humanitarian aid wherever required. **END**

FIREFIGHTER TO STUDY INTERNATIONAL MVA RESCUE TECHNIQUES



Rescue Training Officer QF Peter Kirwan is one of only 28 successful NSW candidates to be heading overseas next year on a study project funded by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

In March 2014, QF Kirwan will travel to Norway, the United States and New Zealand, spending a fortnight in each country to investigate new techniques in motor vehicle accident (MVA) rescue. At each destination he will participate in a relevant training course, ride along with firefighters, and meet with paramedics and crash investigators.

Road crashes cause approximately 1,500 deaths in Australia each year, with an additional 30,000 people being seriously injured. The human cost and the financial cost are both enormous. The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics estimated that the cost of road accidents in Australia in 2006 was \$17.85 billion. Of this, \$3.87 billion was for fatal crashes and \$9.61 billion was for crashes in which people sustained injuries. Any research into new rescue techniques that can reduce the human and financial costs of crashes therefore represents a wise investment.

"FRNSW's current practice on arrival at any MVA is to initially stabilise the vehicle before starting to extricate the occupants," said QF Kirwan. "However, in Norway, New Zealand and the USA, in some exceptional circumstances (where, for example, a car has collided

with a tree or pole and with the full agreement of medical experts on the scene), rescue crews may pull the vehicle clear of the tree or pole, with the victim still entrapped, before stabilising it. This enables easier and faster access for rescuers, which can shorten the rescue time and may improve the victim's rate of recovery from trauma and injury."

Norwegian emergency services conduct multi-agency training covering techniques that have a high reliance on winches. After completing the appropriate weakening cuts, the winches are used to reverse the deformation in the vehicle, effectively straightening it back out. With training sessions that include medical and rescue crews working together, each agency is also aware of the capabilities and limitations of the other, which enables smoother incident ground operations.

The New Zealand Fire Service has sent instructors to Norway to be trained in these techniques and, while not all the procedures have been adopted, the experience has led to changes in NZFS rescue practices, with emergency services personnel now willing to move vehicles with patients in-situ to simplify the rescue. In the United States as well,

some fire departments are training rescuers to move vehicles involved in a crash to enable greater access and shorten victim extrication times. QF Kirwan will work side by side with medical and rescue experts in these countries to explore the feasibility of Australian rescue agencies introducing similar training and techniques.

On his return, QF Kirwan will complete a report for submission to the Churchill Trust. He will also deliver a presentation at the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, develop or adapt learning resources for a range of agencies, and work with the NSW Institute of Trauma and Injury Management to publish an article in a medical journal. **END**

Applications for the 2014 Churchill Fellowships close in mid-February 2014. Application packages can be downloaded now at <http://churchilltrust.com.au/applications/2014/>.

For further information, contact Superintendent Ian Krimmer, Vice President of the Churchill Fellows Association, on (02) 9265 2948.



Out of control fuel tanker sparks emergency in Mona Vale

 **VIEW VIDEO AT**
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews

OR

 **SCAN CODE TO WATCH NOW**



01 OCT 15:37

At 1537hrs on Tuesday October 1, FRNSW received multiple calls to a crash on Mona Vale Road at Warriewood. Due to the strong winds and bushfire danger, 25 Mosman was standing by with 6 Mona Vale. 68 Narrabeen Pumper and Rescue were also dispatched. At the same time an automatic smoke sensing camera on the RFS fire lookout tower at Terrey Hills sighted what was thought to be a bushfire at Ingleside, and multiple RFS units were immediately dispatched. The result was that within minutes, four FRNSW appliances and three RFS tankers were on scene and at work at a catastrophic scene. First arriving crews were confronted with flames leaping 20-30 metres into the air, a running petrol fire, explosions,

multiple cars and bush on fire and the fire threatening a nearby warehouse and office building. The incident was sparked when an out of control petrol tanker collided with a number of other cars, rolled on its side and burst into flames.

Tragically two people died when petrol ignited and several others were badly injured. The truck driver was also injured and was assisted from his vehicle before it was engulfed in flames. Firefighters from 25 Mosman had the horrific task of rendering first aid to a person with 100% full thickness burns as they pulled up on the western side of the accident – 6 Mona Vale set up on the eastern side.

At the height of the incident, more than 10 FRNSW crews, nine RFS tankers, NSW Police, and Ambulance

crews were on scene. Nearby buildings including Pittwater RSL were evacuated and Mona Vale road was closed to traffic. Under difficult conditions, firefighters managed to bring the fire under control and extinguished it at around 1645 hours.

FRNSW crews remained on scene for many hours to deal with the runoff of fuel and other hazards as a result of the accident and the fire. Around 18,000 litres of fuel were decanted and at 0830 hours the next day, the truck was righted. This resulted in a small spill of residual fuel which was contained and rendered safe. The incident attracted very strong media attention and has since led to extensive checks on truck safety.

END

RECORD NUMBER OF WOMEN BECOME FIREFIGHTERS



VIEW VIDEO AT
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews

OR



**SCAN CODE TO
WATCH NOW**



A record 10 female recruits graduated from FRNSW's State Training College at Alexandria in September – the largest number of women to graduate in one class.



Senior Firefighter David Valentine and his daughter Laura



Station Officer Ian Sargent and his daughter Claire

Their graduation marked a major milestone for FRNSW, where women make up only 4% of full-time firefighters. However the number of women applying has increased after recent targeted recruitment campaigns.

Chief Superintendent Craig Brierley was delighted with the increase in the number of female applicants. "Our aim is to represent the community we serve – both genders and all nationalities," he said.

Among the new female recruits was Claire Sargent, 22, of Springwood. Her uncle and father are both firefighters and she said it was a privilege to graduate with so many women. "It's a respected career and it's full of challenges," she said. "I've grown up knowing I can do whatever I choose to do no matter what others think, so becoming a firefighter has always been an option. I would love to be able to use the skills I learn at FRNSW to help as many people as I can."

Also graduating was Laura Valentine, 20, from Coffs Harbour. Firefighter Valentine, the daughter of SF David Valentine, said she wanted to become a firefighter because of "the challenge, the teamwork and the great service to the community".

FRNSW's 325 stn Helensburgh has five female firefighters in its crew of 14. So it is a distinct possibility that locals could see an all-woman crew responding to local emergency calls.

Commissioner Mullins said the last recruitment campaign saw more women applying to become firefighters and significant increases in the number of successful female recruits making it through the rigorous selection process. "These firefighters are some of the best of the best, and I hope more women will be encouraged to apply for firefighting positions in the future as we've still got a long way to go if we are to better reflect the communities we serve," he said. "Just over 8% of all FRNSW staff are women, including 4.02% of permanent firefighters and 6.56% of retained firefighters. Being a firefighter is no longer a man's domain. There is no question in this day



Among the recruits to graduate in September was also Firefighter Tim Hamilton, who follows the footsteps of his father, FRNSW's Director of Metropolitan Operations, Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton. Firefighter Hamilton said he too wanted a rewarding career. "Growing up in a firefighting household, I learned to appreciate what it meant to be a firefighter, and that's something that I want to be able to carry on within my family," he said.

and age that women can do anything that a man can do – our challenge is to communicate this effectively to women so they will consider firefighting as a career."

END

Distance training program an AUSTRALIAN FIRST

After consulting with different areas of FRNSW, the Command Leadership and Management (CLM) section has achieved a significant milestone in commencing a trial Incident Management Distance Simulation Training (IMDST) program.

Introduction of this program, developed by specialist systems and consulting firm VectorCommand Pty Ltd, was first proposed in 2000, but did not eventuate at that time due to technological limitations and a lack of resources. However, due to the perseverance of the CLM section, and particularly project manager SF Wayne Miller, this initiative has finally come to fruition.

The simulation uses a video and audio link between any FRNSW fire station computer and a State Training College computer. Voice communication between the trainee and the trainer is achieved via a FRNSW phone (Pax system).

The trial runs for three months. The initial two sessions were extremely well received by participants and their supervisors, who can monitor the training session from another remote location. In both sessions – the first at Yass and the second at Young – firefighters observed as the Captain and Deputy Captain

undertook exercises while supervised by a trainer based in Alexandria. Even more impressive, the Duty Commander monitored the Young exercise visually and audibly from the Goulburn Zone Office. In fact, anyone within FRNSW can monitor the training if arranged beforehand. Since then, more than eight additional sessions have been successfully undertaken.

The IMDST program, using proprietary VectorCommand incident management (IM) simulations, is a first in Australasia and possibly the world.

An incident management system is a fire service's most valuable safety tool. This initiative will contribute to a safer workplace for firefighters. Distance training provides considerable benefits in terms of effectiveness and cost saving when compared to physical face-to-face training with its associated travel and other expenses.

This training introduces some terminology from the 'Blue Card' command certification program, along with basic systems such as the 'order

model' (repeating messages back to avoid misunderstanding), in anticipation of new IM standards, objectives and goals to be released in the near future.

Current IM best-practice training and education – as delivered during the Senior Firefighter, Station Officer and Inspector Promotion Programs core skills training days and Captains Development Programs – ensures a consistent approach in applying IM across the organisation.

Participants receive assistance such as pre-training material, scenarios, details, communications cards, IM structure material, pre-training discussions and specific help during the scenarios. The training is not a 'stump the stars' session, but a user friendly training program designed to improve the IM skills of participants and observers. For further enquiries, contact the Command Leadership and Management Section on 9318 4302.

END

Electronic tablets introduced to record assessments

Education and Training Instructors can now record the results of student assessments using electronic tablets.

The use of a specially designed mobile assessment app significantly speeds up the process of recording results. It has also proven more accurate than the paper-based system, and recording assessment results online automatically updates the participants' training records in Employee Self Service.

The app is extremely user-friendly and the instructors using it have been very positive in their feedback. "Online assessment? Wow! How good is that?" SO Wayne Staples, Senior Instructor North Coast said. "It was remarkably easy ... I have offered a lot of criticism over the last couple of years about the

amount of evidence forms, time and paperwork associated with training. Today however I get a chance to offer my thanks and praise for a system that looks very promising."

The app is so user-friendly, in fact, that no training is required prior to use. New users are simply provided with a user guide. Nine instructors and college staff members have also volunteered to provide support and advice to new users who aren't confident about the technology.

Throughout 2014, Education and Training will expand the range of assessments that the tablets can be used for, and further improvements will be made to the app as a result of feedback from instructors. **END**



KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE ON OUR ROADS

FRNSW is a key provider of youth road safety education, with initiatives such as RescuEd, the STEER program in the Northern Rivers region, and our contributions to events such as 'bstreetsmart'.



RescuEd reaches teenagers throughout NSW

In the period January to October 2013, FRNSW firefighters from 35 stations delivered the RescuEd road safety program to students at 63 high schools.

This successful program was developed in consultation with the Road Safety Education Program of the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), and is adapted from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's 'Road Accident Awareness Program'. It meets the learning outcomes of the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus for students in years 9 and 10.

The RescuEd program format involves:

- FRNSW firefighters demonstrating to students how they extricate a victim from a wrecked vehicle
- a classroom presentation in which firefighters present a DVD/video of 'Tim's Story' – a dramatisation of an actual event in which a teenager was severely injured in a road accident
- a general discussion with students on the causes and consequences of a road accident, and the steps students can take to reduce the chance of being involved in one.

STEERing young people in the right direction

Retained Firefighter Philip Preston of 388 Mullumbimby coordinates the innovative STEER program, which provides road safety services and resources to young P-plate drivers in NSW's Northern Rivers region.

STEER stands for 'Support, Training, Education, Encouragement and Rewards'. This program is designed to reduce the number of accidents involving young drivers; to discourage risky behaviour such as drinking, drug-taking and speeding; and to encourage the choice of safe transport options.

A key component has been development of a smartphone app that

connects young drivers with others needing a lift, thereby enabling safe ride-sharing. The app features driver profiles and enables restricted groups, so participants always know with whom they are travelling.

STEER also delivers the accredited Safer Drivers' Course developed by the NSW Government and health promotion program RRISK.



Fires show students how to 'bstreetsmart'

In August, FRNSW was again a key contributor to the annual 'bstreetsmart' event for young people at AllPhones Arena.

FRNSW firefighters joined with other emergency services and agencies to present road safety education to thousands of year 10-12 students, with fire crews staging a motor vehicle accident simulation and demonstrating the extrication of road accident victims.

The event (previously known as the Youth and Road Trauma Forum) has been running since 2004 and aims to reduce fatality and injury rates among young drivers, riders and passengers by promoting safe behaviour. It was open to all high schools throughout NSW and the ACT, and each day included an exciting combination of interactive displays and demonstrations of crash scenarios, rescues and vehicle stopping distances.

Bstreetsmart is held because our youth are being severely injured and killed due to potentially preventable road crashes. The NSW road accident statistics for 2010 show that 17 to 25 year olds were involved in 53,863 road traffic crashes that year, with 73 fatalities and 14,915 injuries. These young people hold 15% of licences, but are involved in 28% of crashes, which often result in hospitalisation.

The event provided students with realistic depictions of the trauma caused by road crashes and allowed them to choose from interactive exhibits created by a range of agencies such as Westmead Hospital's Emergency Department, the NSW Police Force, Ambulance Service of NSW, St John Ambulance Australia (NSW), NSW State Emergency Service,

Brain Injury Unit and Brain Injury Association, NSW Centre for Road Safety and Crash Lab, and Drug and Alcohol Health Promotion Team.

FRNSW was on hand to answer questions and display some of the equipment needed to carry out firefighting and rescue. This year a mockup display of a crash (involving one dead and one severely injured passenger, a pedestrian and an electrical hazard) gave students some invaluable insights. Many FRNSW firefighters were involved, including crews from 15 Burwood, 16 Concord and 1 City of Sydney, together with the team from Community Safety and Technical Training Rescue. They all dedicated many hours to prepare for and deliver their presentation.

■ END

Safety messages **FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

FRNSW teams at the bstreetsmart event promoted discussion about attitudes and behaviours that can lead to road accidents, and encouraged reflection on the consequences of reckless behaviour (including the potential physical, social, emotional and financial effects). Key 'Do' and 'Don't' messages included:

DO

- obey speed limits
- drive to conditions
- wear your seatbelt at all times
- give way to emergency vehicles
- ensure one person, one seat, one seatbelt

DON'T

- drive when tired
- text and drive
- drink and drive
- speed
- take risks

Wentworthville



Fiery explosion destroys Wentworthville shops

08 OCT 04:10

Just after 0410 hrs on Tuesday 8 October, the FRNSW Comms Centre was inundated with Triple Zero calls to a fire and explosion in a building on Station St, Wentworthville. The explosion was so loud that firefighters at nearby Wentworthville Fire Station heard the blast.

Firefighters from Wentworthville, Merrylands, and Parramatta's pumper and ladder platform, quickly responded to the scene along with a number of Police officers. On arrival, fire crews found a shop with residences above totally involved in fire and a significant building collapse caused by the explosion. Debris was scattered across the street as a result of the explosion. The incident was quickly upgraded to a 4th Alarm.

Firefighters battled the blaze for more than two hours, rescuing two people from

the building who were transported to hospital by ambulance with burns and other injuries. A number of Police officers who arrived before FRNSW crews were also taken to hospital with smoke inhalation and minor burns following rescue attempts. The building was totally destroyed by the fire and explosion.

The fire was extinguished just after 0620 hours, but firefighters, including USAR operators, remained on scene throughout the following day

continuing the search for two people who were still reported missing. No further victims were found.

Crews from a number of Sydney stations worked at the incident throughout the morning, along with USAR1, FIRU and the accelerant detection dog team. Later the following day, NSW Police charged one of the men rescued from the rubble with destroying property with intent to endanger life. **END**

FRNSW'S SAFETY STRATEGY

creating an even safer workplace



 **VIEW VIDEO AT**
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews

OR

 **SCAN CODE TO WATCH NOW**



The Safety Strategy 2013-2017, launched in late October, articulates a bold vision to ensure the highest possible levels of health and safety in FRNSW over the next four years.



Safety challenges ahead

FRNSW has worked hard to establish the Be Safe program, but as an organisation committed to continuous improvement, it cannot stop there. A number of areas still need to be improved to embed the Be Safe program into everyday work practices. This will require each person to understand their responsibilities and to take ownership of initiatives outlined in the Strategy.

Where FRNSW wants to be in 2017

Over the next four years, the Safety Strategy will help everyone within FRNSW to contribute to achieving a safer workplace.

By the end of 2017, FRNSW will be a fire service that:

- has embedded the Be Safe program into the organisation's operations and activities
- ensures all policies, procedures and training are built and delivered on a foundation of safety

- ensures all employees, across all levels, understand their role in safety and demonstrate safety ownership in their daily work tasks
- encourages employees to engage in programs to develop and maintain optimal physical and mental health
- ensures those who are injured or become ill at work are supported and consistently managed in line with appropriate evidence-based treatment
- strives for continuous improvement in all aspects of health and safety.

What staff can do

All staff within FRNSW have a role in 'owning safety' and working together to ensure each person returns home safely to their families and friends at the end of every working day or night. This requires:

- taking reasonable care for their own health and safety
- ensuring their acts or omissions do not adversely affect or risk the health and safety of others

- complying with any reasonable instruction that enables FRNSW to comply with the Work Health and Safety Act, 2011
- cooperating with FRNSW policies and procedures relating to workplace health and safety
- immediately reporting all safety incidents to their managers and entering them into the incident notification system.

Safety is important for all staff

Commissioner Mullins has placed his full support behind the new Safety Strategy.

"Each of us in FRNSW has the capacity to work safely," he said. "Together we can protect our fellow work colleagues while working to protect the safety of the community we serve. We all should take pride in identifying safety issues in the workplace and acting on them. We should always turn our attention to how we can do things better to ensure the safety of all involved in, or affected by, the work we carry out." **END**

Been exposed to a disturbing incident and need someone to talk to?

Our Critical Incident Support Program can help you.

Call our Wellbeing Coordinator on
(02) 9265 3910 or 0448 295 725

or the 24 hour Message Line on
1800 657 903



**FIRE
INCIDENT**



CARS ABLAZE at Sydney Aquatic Centre

13 OCT 15:00

At around 1500 hours on Sunday 13 October, FRNSW began receiving numerous Triple Zero calls to a fire in the carpark of the Aquatic Centre at Sydney Olympic Park.

A large black column of smoke quickly rose over the Olympic Park precinct as numerous cars caught fire from flames swept along the carpark's garden beds and also from car to car by the strong winds. As the emergency unfolded, the centre's evacuation plan swung into action and around 500 people were safely moved away from danger by staff from the complex.

The first arriving crews requested additional backup as the fire rapidly spread and multiple vehicles caught

fire. The incident was upgraded to a 6th Alarm. Fire crews worked in extreme conditions to extinguish the fires, prevent further cars from catching alight, and stop the fire impacting the rail corridor and surrounding Olympic sports centres. A water bombing helicopter was sent to the scene and assisted firefighting operations from the air by dropping water on spot fires in the bushland surrounding the car park. The railway line was temporarily closed during the emergency. RailCorp firefighting personnel worked alongside FRNSW firefighters to ensure rail services were quickly restored.

As further crews arrived, firefighters managed to gain the upper hand and contain the fire, although many cars continued to burn. A chain of appliances



VIEW VIDEO AT
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews



OR
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relay pumped from distant water mains to assist with water supplies. For over two hours, firefighters battled the wind-fanned fire before declaring the scene safe enough for Police to commence their investigation into the cause of the fire.

Ultimately this fire destroyed 47 parked cars and a motorbike, and severely damaged 33 other cars. Police and Hazmat crews checked the scene thoroughly before vehicle owners were allowed to start recovering the hundreds of cars unaffected by fire. Commissioner Mullins attended the fire and praised firefighters who worked in full structural PPC and SCBA in 34° heat.

END

Taking the lead on curbing workplace MISUSE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS



FRNSW is leading the Australian emergency services sector as the first fire agency in this country to introduce alcohol and drug testing for all employees.

A new Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) policy was introduced for all FRNSW employees on 4 September 2013, reflecting the shared commitment of FRNSW and the Fire Brigade Employees' Union to maintain a safe and healthy workplace. The policy is aimed at ensuring that staff will not be adversely affected in the workplace by alcohol or substance misuse, thereby protecting the safety of both the workforce and the community.

FRNSW guidelines on alcohol and other drugs include the following.

- Employees are not permitted to use, sell and/or possess prohibited substances.
- All employees must remain under the prescribed concentration of 0.02 of alcohol while rostered on duty and at any time while in the workplace.
- Employees who consume alcohol or general medications are encouraged to do so responsibly and avoid substance misuse and/or abuse.
- All employees are obliged to report the misuse and/or abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs.

The policy introduces vital safety and accountability processes through a program of random, targeted and post-incident/accident testing, using oral fluid (saliva) testing for drugs and breath testing for alcohol. Approximately 10% of FRNSW workers will be randomly tested each year.

Testing, using the services of an accredited external provider, commenced on 1 December with the Commissioner being the first person tested. The testing processes will be administered and monitored by the Workplace Standards Branch, which will advise managers and employees on the requirements of the AOD policy, ensure procedures are adhered to and appropriately address any issues. **■ END**



VIEW VIDEO AT
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews



OR
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WATCH NOW



For further information about the AOD policy and procedures, please visit <http://intranet/toolkit/about-you/all-staff/alcohol-and-other-drugs> or contact Workplace Standards on phone **9265 2826** or email DrugAndAlcoholUnit@fire.nsw.gov.au

STATION OPENINGS

A handful of new fire stations and station refurbishments were unveiled throughout November and December. Commissioner Mullins said the refurbishments were an important investment in firefighting capability. "These station upgrades will boost firefighters' ability to continue their work keeping our communities safe and protected from fires and other emergencies," he said.

Springwood

Permanent firefighters started work at FRNSW's Springwood Fire Station on Friday 1 November on the 24/7 roster, boosting fire and emergency protection for residents in the lower Blue Mountains. The 21 permanents joined the 18 retained firefighters already working at the station.

Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton welcomed the allocation of permanent firefighters to Springwood Fire Station. "This is a significant boost to Springwood and the surrounding communities. With the risks in the lower Blue Mountains – building fires, bushfires, major road and rail transport routes – it's important to have this additional firefighting capacity. I welcome all the new firefighters to the Blue Mountains and I am sure that the local community will also make them feel welcome."

In October a major \$1.5 million upgrade of Springwood Fire Station was also completed. The upgrade included more equipment storage and extended staff areas including a training room, an office and gym.



Springwood Fire Station

Jerilderie

Commissioner Mullins and John Williams MP, Member for Murray-Darling, unveiled the new Jerilderie Fire Station on 5 November. The new \$774,000 fire station is more modern and better equipped with a double engine bay, staff accommodation, and new operational and training facilities.

Coolamon

The new \$529,000 Coolamon Fire Station was unveiled by Commissioner Mullins on 6 November. The new, purpose-built fire station includes a double engine bay, staff accommodation, storage, and new operational and training facilities.

Grenfell

A major \$794,000 upgrade of Grenfell Fire Station was unveiled by the Commissioner on 7 November. The upgrade brings the station up to modern standards with a new engine bay, and new operational and training facilities. The old engine bay has been transformed into a new

training facility and staff accommodation, including a kitchen. There is also a specially designed breathing apparatus service and storage area, and storage facilities.

Barraba

Barraba's new \$852,000 fire station was unveiled by the Commissioner and Kevin Anderson MP, Member for Tamworth on 27 November. The new fire station on Henry St includes a double engine bay, new operational and staff facilities and new storage facilities for equipment.

Merriwa

The newly refurbished and expanded Merriwa Fire Station which has received a \$550,000 upgrade was officially unveiled by the Commissioner on 3 December. The building has been extended to provide improved staff and facilities, and more storage space for firefighting equipment.

END



Merriwa Fire Station

Head Office relocation ON TRACK FOR 2015

1 Amarina Avenue Greenacre has been confirmed as the location for all FRNSW Head Office functions.



Following considerable planning and consultation with staff, it was announced in September that Head Office will relocate within the next two years to a completely new building on FRNSW's current Greenacre site, 17 kilometres southwest of the Sydney central business district.

I Amarina

The GSA group has been appointed to design FRNSW's new Head Office at Greenacre. GroupGSA is an integrated design practice offering architecture, interior design, urban planning, landscape architecture and graphic design. Their team is a multi award winning group, with a project history of benchmark projects incorporating flexible and activity oriented workplaces including Lend Lease at The Bond and The Gauge, and more recently HOST advertising and Origin Energy. They are recognised as one of Australia's top 10 design firms, having completed over 3,000 projects in Australia.

Part of the GSA team, Calder Consultants, have been engaged to assist FRNSW to develop the office design. Calder Consultants are a global consulting firm that specialise in innovative workspace design and are one of Australia's leading workplace designers. They have designed work spaces for clients such as Macquarie Bank, NAB, Treasury Victoria and

the Queensland Government. During December, Calder Consultants conducted focus interviews and workshops with staff to explore how they work and the way work is best performed. This gave staff an opportunity to provide their input regarding workplace tasks and future work styles. This feedback is being analysed by Calder Consultants and will form a key part of FRNSW's brief to the architects for the new building and workspace.

Evolve Constructions Pty Ltd were appointed to undertake building works for the staged relocation of staff from Building A at Greenacre as part of the Head Office relocation project. Evolve have previously carried out work for FRNSW at Greenacre and were selected following a competitive tender run by NSW Public Works. Stage 1 demolition and construction works started late November and completed in mid-December. The relocation of staff from Building A is expected to be completed by the end of March 2014.

Pymont Fire Station

The upper floors of the Pymont Fire Station are being renovated, and will be used as a temporary 'touchdown' location for staff who need to be in or near the Sydney CBD for specific purposes. The fire station will also be renovated as part of this project. **END**



FIREFIIGHTERS 'STATE OF



Laurie Daley and the FRNSW team

NSW Blues Coach Laurie Daley (on left)



FRNSW's rugby league association brought in NSW rugby league's big guns in its preparation for the inaugural 'State of Origin' clash against Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) in Brisbane on Saturday 14 September.



VIEW VIDEO AT
fire.nsw.gov.au/frnews



OR
SCAN CODE TO
WATCH NOW



Phil Gould presents jersey

A couple of weeks before the game, NSW Blues coach Laurie Daley ran a training session at Drummoyne Oval to help FRNSW players prepare. The following week, former Blues coach and rugby league commentator Phil Gould visited City of Sydney to present team members with their jerseys and give them a final pep talk before their departure north.

Acting Superintendent Josh Turner said it was hoped the competition, played at Wynnum Manly's Kougari Oval, would become an annual event.

This year's competition included a match between the Open sides of both fire services while FRNSW's Masters team took on a local Wynnum Manly side. Money raised on the day was donated to QFRS's charity of choice. **END**

Safe... and in its place

Story and photos courtesy Museum of Fire staff and research team

SO Lance Haigh inspects the Murwillumbah Bell

FRNSW is proud of its history and traditions. Consequently, a number of projects are now underway which will bring our story up to date. Firstly, a sequel to our centennial history (*Fighting Fire 1884-1984*) is under consideration and will bring our story up to the present. Secondly, a companion volume of 'oral history' is already in progress – we are interviewing firefighters both past and present, so that their unique personal memories will be preserved. These will be illustrated with the distinctive artwork of well-known caricature artist, Mick Joffe.

But there's more to preserving our history than just writing books about it. Heritage items also have a story to tell, and so it's important that we preserve enough fire brigade heritage to tell that story. That's what we're doing now in the Movable Heritage Project. This Project is sponsored by Deputy Chief Executive Rosemary Milkins, and has been developed by A/Superintendent Ed Mednis (Project Manager), David Oliver (Project Coordinator) and Gary Boyce (Historian/Heritage Officer).

Movable heritage is simply those items of heritage that are not part of a building. In other words, they're 'movable'. And because they're movable, they're easily lost. Over the years, much of our movable heritage has been lost forever – through station 'clean-outs', donations to local historical societies/museums, retirement souvenirs, theft or damage – and even inappropriate restoration. Much of this loss has occurred because people have been unaware of the significance of these items. And that's the buzzword in heritage management – significance. Heritage items don't have to be old – they don't have to be 'worth a mint' – they don't even have to be rare – but they do have to be 'significant'. (There's a set of criteria for determining if an item is significant – but in a nutshell, an item is significant if it's important to someone because of the story that it tells).

In the past, some of our movable heritage was preserved at the Museum of Fire, but too often this was due to the

foresight of enthusiasts rather than good heritage management. It's now time to take a more planned approach.

Under Section 170 of the Heritage Act, 1977, Government agencies are required to identify, document, and properly manage all heritage under their control or ownership. The Movable Heritage Project aims to do just that. To achieve this aim, FRNSW has developed a new Movable Heritage Policy.

Identifying movable heritage across the entire State is a mammoth task and so will be rolled out progressively on a zone-by-zone basis. Three pilot programs (Head Office, City of Sydney and RS2) were undertaken to test the process, and proved very successful. Zone Commanders will receive information on what constitutes heritage, their responsibilities, and the identification process; and will supervise the project in their respective zones. Officers in charge will receive information and guidelines as well as the necessary forms to assist with their responsibility (to ensure that the various heritage items at their location are properly recorded and forwarded to the Zone Office for data entry). The information captured will ultimately be recorded into SAP. Once the process is complete, it will be possible for FRNSW personnel to access SAP and print out a listing of all movable heritage items at their respective locations. An annual audit of heritage items will be undertaken as part of the existing station audit.

It is important to understand that the purpose of the Movable Heritage Project is not to remove items from their current

location (something which sadly has occurred in the past). The overarching aim is to ensure that items are identified, protected and kept safe in their place. Removing heritage from its historical context reduces its heritage significance. During the City of Sydney pilot, a bell (located in the basement) was researched and identified as Murwillumbah's original bell – dating back to 19 April 1909, when the Municipal Council purchased the bell for the town's local volunteer fire brigade. This bell has now been earmarked for a return to its place of significance – Murwillumbah Fire Station – never to be removed again.

The Bathurst Fire Bell is even more exciting. Manufactured in Glasgow, Scotland in January 1855, it was used by the early Sydney Insurance Companies Fire Brigade from 1860 (until 1884 when the Metropolitan Fire Brigade took over operations). It was then sold to the Bathurst Fire Brigade Board in 1887, and has remained in Bathurst ever since. This bell has been assessed as being of high significance to NSW and has therefore been nominated for the State Heritage Register. Its identification and assessment ensures that the bell will always remain at the place where it is most significant ie Bathurst fire station (the early Insurance Brigade's fire station in Sydney no longer exists).

FRNSW, working in partnership with the Museum of Fire, is determined to ensure that our heritage (and the story that it has to tell) is preserved for future generations, and that it stays – safe in its place. **END**



8th Alarm fire stops CBD traffic

16 OCT 9:55

At 0955 hrs on Wednesday 16 October, FRNSW crews from across Sydney were called to a building fire on the corner of Bathurst and Pitt St in the centre of the city. Firefighters were alerted to the fire by an automatic fire alarm and first arriving crews were on scene within five minutes. 50 workers were evacuated from the building. The incident was quickly escalated up to an 8th Alarm response.

The fire occurred in a three-level basement area of a 26-storey building which was undergoing demolition. The basements contained three large electrical substations, which hampered

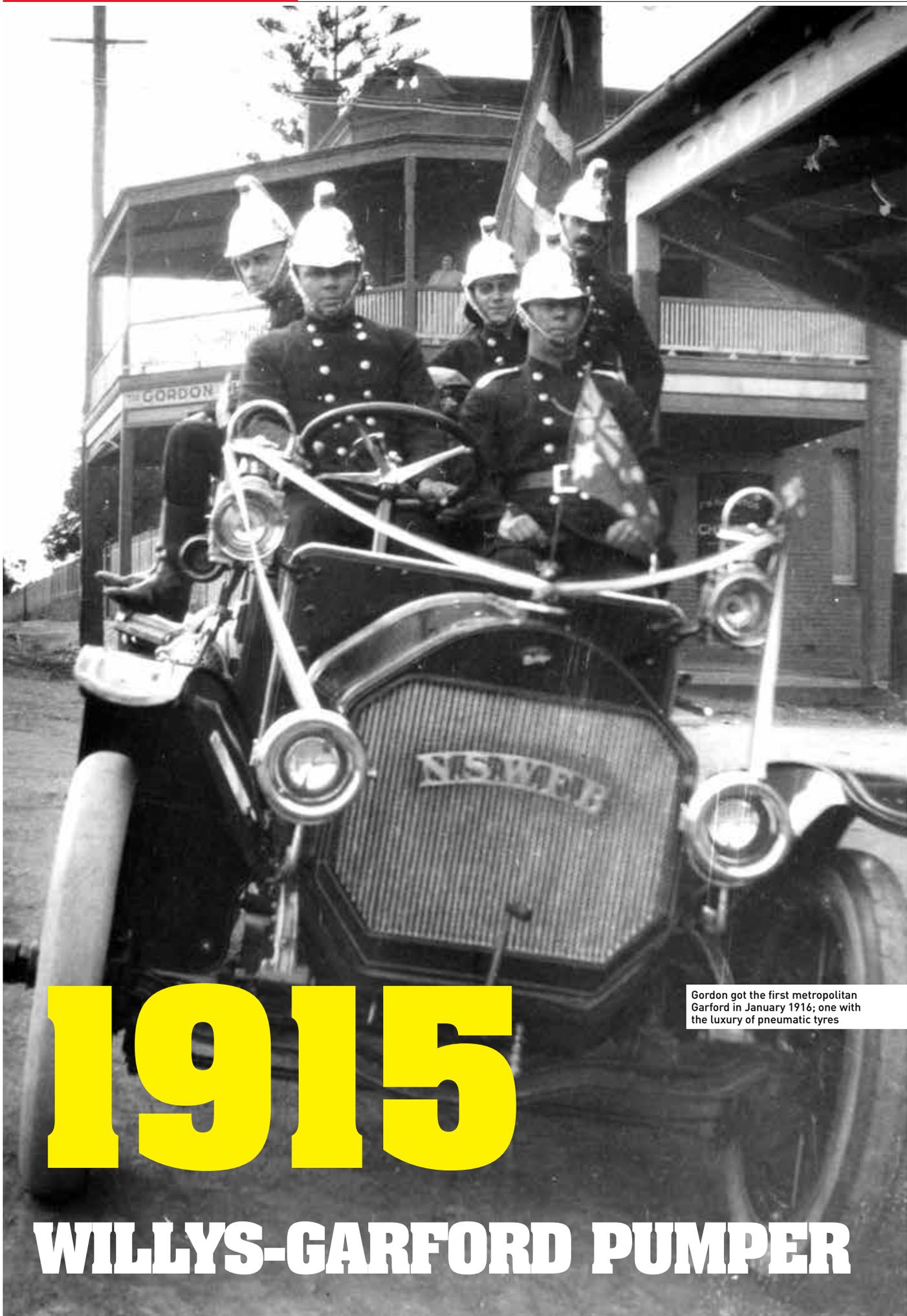
firefighting operations because of fears of live electrical equipment. Due to the building's age, one of the electrical substations was known to contain asbestos, which posed additional threats to firefighters. There were also concerns that the underground railway network could be impacted.

Fire crews faced very difficult conditions in the basements which were very hot, dark and smokellogged. Firefighters were unable to work in the super-heated environment for more than five minutes at a time and so were rotated regularly as

they worked to locate the source of the fire. At the height of the fire, a partial floor collapse in one of the basements further hampered firefighting operations.

NSW Police cordoned off the area with Bathurst, Castlereagh and Pitt streets closed for much of the day. RailCorp also responded crews to the scene. It took more than five hours for firefighters to bring the fire under control. A great effort by all crews working under difficult conditions.

END



Gordon got the first metropolitan Garford in January 1916; one with the luxury of pneumatic tyres

1915

WILLYS-GARFORD PUMPER

The oldest motorised vehicle in FRNSW's Heritage Fleet is a 1915 Garford Type 64 pumper. Although made by the Garford Motor Truck Co of Lima, Ohio, they were distributed by the Willys Motor Car company up until 1916, hence the dual name.

These vehicles were developed by the NSW Fire Brigade for its plan to motorise its fleet, by replacing hand drawn and horse drawn "manual" pumpers in suburban and country areas with light, inexpensive, appliances. New centrifugal pumps were sourced from England, or made in the Brigades' workshops and fitted to a chain driven PTO system. The first unit was installed at Grafton in December 1915, followed in 1916 at Gordon, Casino, Parramatta, Waverley, Albury, Annandale and Beecroft. Further deliveries 1917-18 went to Ashfield, Bathurst, Broken Hill, Cessnock, Drummoyne, Gordon,

Goulburn, North Sydney, Orange, Randwick, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong. The Brigade continued to acquire Garford chassis in a variety of models up to 1926.

When later displaced from the above stations by newer appliances, the pumpers eventually found their way to Baukham Hills, Blacktown, Braidwood, Canowindra, Fairfield, Gladesville, Griffith, Lakemba, Leeton, Maclean, Maitland, Merrylands, Mortdale, Rhodes, Rozelle, Riverstone, Rydalmere, Toongabbie, and Walgett. Many of the Sydney suburbs were rural outposts in those days.

Most of these Willys-Garford pumpers were withdrawn by the mid-1930s, being

displaced by the more modern Dennis 250 pumpers acquired from the late 1920s. Two units were retained and had their bodies and pumps removed for conversion into "hose winders" for use at the Volunteer Firemen's Demonstrations (Championships) inaugurated in 1932. They enabled used wet hose to be quickly cleaned and wound up after an event, ready for re-use.

One of the pumpers was set aside for preservation in the early 1960s and was fitted with the modified body of a 1920s Dennis. It is now on display at the Museum of Fire, along with other Garford appliances of that era. **END**



As there was no rail connection in those days, Broken Hill's new Garford was driven from Sydney on largely unmade roads and with a top speed of ~30 kph



Wagga's crew show off their new Garford in 1918



Restored Garford with the modified body of a 1920s Dennis, now on display at the Museum of Fire



ARMIDALE FIREFIGHTERS SALUTED 80 YEARS ON

On a handful of occasions, the gallant actions of firefighters have been acknowledged with the highest honour a firefighter can receive. Since 1932, only 26 firefighters have received the Medal for Conspicuous Bravery in recognition of their outstanding actions in the finest traditions of the service.

The first eight recipients were remembered recently at an anniversary celebration in Armidale on 20 September 2013, 80 years after the original presentation.

This all started on 19 May 1932 when eight Volunteer Firemen from the Armidale Brigade – Fred G W Maizey, T Snell, R W Wicks, J H Munsie, R J Colmer, T S Snell, W Robinson, and B H Jones – were called to a fire at the Braund produce store.

The firefighters found themselves in one of the most life-threatening scenarios imaginable. The store not only sold produce, but was also licensed to sell explosives. The firefighters knew that a large part of the town was in danger because of the fire.

Volunteer Firemen William Robinson, a 38-year-old father of six, and Beresford Jones, 20, were on a hose line in the yard outside when 9,000 detonators exploded in a burning storeroom. Volunteer Fireman Jones was killed instantly. Volunteer Fireman Robinson was fatally wounded and died 16 hours later. Sub Station Officer Fred Maizey was also critically injured in the blaze.

Near the storeroom was a shed containing 400 sticks of gelignite, 10 pounds of dynamite and a box of

“The actions of the Armidale firefighters at the Braund fire were remarkable and led to the striking of our highest honour – the Medal for Conspicuous Bravery”

cartridges. Despite the grave danger posed by this explosives store, the surviving members of the brigade continued attacking the raging fire by playing a water curtain around the explosives, thus subduing the fire. As a result, they stopped the blaze from destroying the town centre.

In light of their brave actions, the Board of Fire Commissioners introduced a new medal, the Medal for Conspicuous Bravery. The first eight medals – two awarded posthumously – were conferred in June 1933 and presented at a special ceremony at the Armidale Town Hall on 20 September later that year. It was on this anniversary that members of the Armidale community, firefighters

including Commissioner Mullins, and descendants of the first eight recipients gathered again first at the Armidale Fire Station and then the Town Hall.

The original fire engine used in the 1932 fire was present at the anniversary activities, the first time it had been in Armidale since that fateful night.

“The actions of the Armidale firefighters at the Braund fire were remarkable and led to the striking of our highest honour – the Medal for Conspicuous Bravery,” Commissioner Mullins said during the commemoration. “Their selfless determination and sacrifice will never be forgotten.” Commissioner Mullins congratulated the organiser of the special event, Station Officer Wayne Zikan.

As T J Smith, the then President of the Board of Fire Commissioners, said when he unveiled the plaque now situated in the engine bay of Armidale Fire Station:

“When we are all gone and are forgotten, the nobility of their sacrifice will live and their names be honoured and handed down through the generations to come. This tablet I unveil to perpetuate the memory and inspire others in the days to come with the knowledge of the glorious unselfishness and devotion to duty of two brave men.” **END**

Bravery of firefighters recognised by Royal Humane Society

On Friday 4 October, three FRNSW firefighters were recognised for their bravery by the Royal Humane Society.

Senior Firefighters David Rigon and Peter Cooper were awarded a Bronze Medal for rescuing an elderly woman trapped in a house fire at Birchgrove in March 2011. In what was a perilous rescue and despite the fire's intensity, the firefighters accessed the 3rd floor via balconies and a Jumbo ladder to reach and rescue the woman.

Senior Firefighter Michael Banister was awarded the Silver Medal for rescuing a number of people from dangerous surf at North Cronulla Beach in January 2012. He was off duty at the time but when he saw two people swept out by a rip, he grabbed a bodyboard and paddled out to rescue them. He also rescued four more people who got into difficulty when they tried to assist their friends. **END**



Commissioner Mullins congratulates SF Michael Banister

Bob retires in a blaze of glory

After 47 years with the Narromine Fire Brigade, Bob Treseder recently hung up his tunic, helmet and boots for the last time.



The Narromine Deputy Captain officially retired in October after joining the brigade on 15 September 1966 at the age of 29.

"I've loved every minute of it," he said. "When I first joined, we had a little old Bedford and the firefighting operations were a lot simpler in those days. Firefighting has changed a lot since then and it had to change. These days the training and equipment is second to none."

Bob said he wanted to become a firefighter after watching the brigade in action and liked how they operated.

"I was only going to join for a couple of years because I thought they were alright and I ended up staying for 47," he said. "Most of the time when we leave a job, the person is really thankful. And that's why you're in it really, to help people."

Bob was farewelled with a special function in October where the Member

for Dubbo Troy Grant presented him with the very first NSW Parliament Dubbo Electorate Award. He has also been recognised for his work serving the community when he received the Narromine Citizen of the Year Award.

Bob's son Peter has been promoted to Deputy Captain at Narromine and Bob is now working on his grandchildren to join as Retained Firefighters. **END**



Mini tornado hits Hornsby

18 NOV 14:45

Fire crews responded to a series of storm-related incidents in Hornsby on the afternoon of Monday 18 November, following what has been described as a mini-tornado.

Shortly after 1445 hours, FRNSW received an automatic fire alarm call to Hornsby Westfield shopping centre. The first arriving crew reported that a section of roof and ceiling had collapsed in the cinema complex and adjacent shops. The incident was upgraded to 3rd Alarm Rescue and USAR1 was also dispatched as it was initially believed up to 14 patrons and staff were trapped.

FRNSW firefighters performed a thorough search and rescue under the collapsed ceiling and confirmed that no-one was trapped. Firefighters using hand tools cleared and removed

debris and made the area safe. Shopping centre staff and Police evacuated more than 2,000 people from the centre and paramedics also responded to a number of incidents, including some injuries from broken glass and debris, reported in and around the centre. Firefighters from Gordon, Beecroft, Berowra, Castle Hill, Hornsby, Northmead and Concord attended the incident. Nearby roads and the railway station also received storm damage, impacting on both road and rail traffic in and through the area.

While fire crews worked to deal with the emergency at the Westfield shopping centre, a strike

team was formed to deal with the many other incidents caused by wild weather in the area. A strike team, comprising firefighters from Pyrmont, Marrickville, Campsie, and Ryde, FRNSW Bushfire Officers and Duty Commanders from Parramatta and the City, worked in and around the Jersey Street area.

The crews worked long into the night alongside the NSW State Emergency Service to remove fallen trees from roads and vehicles, secure – and make safe – fallen power and utility cables, secure damaged buildings and assist residents and businesses to return to normal.

END

Punchbowl

**FIRE
INCIDENT**



Massive fire at Punchbowl factory

14 NOV 02:40

At 0240 hours on Thursday 14 November crews responded to numerous calls to a warehouse alight in Belmore Rd, Punchbowl. The first arriving crew from Riverwood sent a Red Message reporting a large 100m x 30m single-storey lightweight construction warehouse full of shipping containers, well alight.

Firefighters initially tried to extinguish the fire through the front entrance of the building using two lines of 70mm hose. However, it quickly became clear that the building was fully involved for at least the first 60m and the focus changed to exposure protection. Signs of structural collapse were also evident very early, with walls buckling, metal sheeting coming off the 15m high

walls and cracks appearing in brickwork at the base of the building.

Riverwood SO Daniel Bourne said, "A defensive strategy was adopted until one of the employees who had self evacuated told firefighters there was another sleeping area at the rear of the building and that someone may have been staying there overnight. The next arriving crew from Lakemba was detailed to perform a rapid search at the rear of the premises. They entered the building in Sector C and found the sleeping quarters at the rear of the building, and confirmed that it was clear."

As the fire escalated nearby exposures came under direct threat, so a 4th Alarm was requested and quickly upgraded to a 6th Alarm, including two aerial appliances. Smoke from the fire began impacting nearby homes and crews had

to force entry into the adjoining factory with a line of 38mm hose to prevent fire spread. Two deluge sprinkler heads were operating on the exterior of the Sector B building greatly assisting fire fighting efforts, but the task of protecting the exposure was made difficult for crews when power lines from the building to the pole began arcing and eventually fell live on the footpath.

Fire crews on scene worked hard to contain the blaze and by 0445 the fire had been controlled. The fire was prevented from spreading to neighbouring businesses and 30% of the building was saved. SO Bourne said the crews buckled down and their work stopped a bad fire from being much worse. **END**



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Deaths and retirements

Farewell and enjoy 'you' time

Name	Station	Date Retired
RetF J Jeffriess	Blacktown	26 Jul 13
RetF H Weir	Kellyville	26 July 13
RetF J Martin	Katoomba	4 Aug 13
SF A Syme	Port Macquarie	9 Aug 13
SF T King	Armidale	16 Aug 13
SF P Whitehouse	BA Hazmat	16 Aug 13
SF A Flowers	Wollongong	16 Aug 13
SF C Johnson	Lane Cove	16 Aug 13
SO P Tickle	City of Sydney	16 Aug 13
QF R Phillips	Katoomba	22 Aug 13
SF R Johns	Silverwater	23 Aug 13
SF A Macrae	Coffs Harbour	23 Aug 13
RetF M Christian	Urunga	28 Aug 13
Insp J Clough	ME1 Zone Office	30 Aug 13
DCapt P Dawes	Paxton	30 Aug 13
RetF B Kane	Muswellbrook	30 Aug 13
Dcapt A Phelps	Scone	31 Aug 13
Dcapt J Clark	Bathurst	1 Sep 13
QF R Desmond	Bathurst	5 Sep 13
RetF D Pickard	Orange	11 Sep 13
RetF R Clements	Canowindra	15 Sep 13
RetF R Shadbolt	Aberdeen	19 Sep 13
Dcapt R Treseder	Narromine	15 Sep 13
Supt S Lyons	MW2 Zone Office	20 Sep 13
Supt G Boath	Operational Improvement	20 Sep 13
Supt C Bond	RN2 Zone Office	20 Sep 13
SO D Clark	Riverwood	20 Sep 13
SO R Fairman	Miranda	20 Sep 13
SF B Wallace	Pymont	20 Sep 13
SF A Cansdale	Umina	20 Sep 13
SF S O'Sullivan	Gladesville	20 Sep 13
SO P Sullivan	City of Sydney	20 Sep 13
Insp R Arlington	MS1 Zone Office	27 Sep 13
SO G Bedford	Sutherland	27 Sep 13
SF G Fox	Sutherland	27 Sep 13
RetF R Kent	Forster	28 Sep 13
Capt D Webb	Morpeth	4 Oct 13
SF R Stuckey	Bateau Bay	4 Oct 13
SO E Salski	MW3	4 Oct 13
RetF D Templeton	Abermain	10 Oct 13
Insp C Sedgwick	Fire Investigation & Research	25 Oct 13
SO O O'Boyle	Umina	30 Oct 13

Vale: With gratitude for service to the people of NSW

Name	Station	Date
Retired SO I Dempsey	The Entrance	Jul 2013
Retired SO T Liston	Stanmore	Jul 2013
Retired SO G Hodder	Katoomba	Jul 2013
SO J Pirona	Tingira Heights	Jul 2013
Retired RetF H Roots	Glenbrook Fire Station	Jul 2013
Retired Admin Officer D Banerjee	Health & Safety Branch	Jul 2013
Retired SO E Downie	Randwick & Matraville	Jul 2013
Retired Capt C Hutson	Tocumwal	Aug 2013
Retired RetF R Alford	South Grafton	Aug 2013
Retired SO W Boyle	Headquarters	Aug 2013
Retired Chief Officer R Threlfo	Headquarters	Aug 2013
Retired DCapt R McMaster	Hillston	Sep 2013
Retired SO R Challinor	Lakemba	Sep 2013
Retired RetF R Boyd	Walcha	Oct 2013
Retired Capt K Muldoon AFSM	Goonellabah	Oct 2013
Retired SF R Rowlands	Gosford	Oct 2013
Retired FF T Robinson	Headquarters	Oct 2013
Retired SO J Davis	Darlinghurst & Waterloo	Oct 2013
Retired RetF D Thorn	Camden	Oct 2013

PREPARE.

ACT.

SURVIVE.

ARE YOU PREPARED TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE?

Prepare your Bush Fire Survival Plan!

Cut back any overhanging trees or shrubs and dispose of cuttings appropriately.

Check the condition of your roof and replace any damaged or missing tiles.

Non-combustible fences are the most effective at withstanding the intense heat generated by a bush fire.

Clean leaves from the roof, gutters and downpipes and fit quality metal leaf guards.

Plant trees and shrubs that are less likely to ignite due to their low oil content.

If you have a water tank, dam or swimming pool, consider installing a Static Water Supply sign (SWS).

INSURANCE
Maintain adequate levels of home and contents insurance.



Enclose underfloor areas.

Store wood piles well away from the house and keep covered.

Keep garden mulch away from the house and keep grass short.

Have a non-combustible doormat.

Install metal flywire or solid screens to the outside windows and doors.



Check the condition of external walls, cladding and seal any gaps.

Remove and store any flammable items away from the house.

Ensure you have a hose which is long enough to reach every part of the home.

Make sure the pressure relief valves on LPG cylinders face outwards (so flame is not directed towards the house).